

TOP STORY: *Bill Clinton's shaky cabinet*

January 11 - 24, 1993

In THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

*"The
third world
war could
start right
here in
Macedonia."*



PAGE 22

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The Iran-contra prosecutor builds his case against Bush.

JOEL BLEIFUSS
REPORTS

THE FINAL INDICTMENT?

EDITORIAL

THE DOORS ARE OPENING, BUT WHAT'S INSIDE?

When historians look back on the 1992 election 30 years from now, they will see a major turning point for our nation. Anti-communism, which served to rationalize a militarized economy and a neo-colonial foreign policy for four decades, will have disappeared from view. Trickle-down economics, which briefly replaced a failed Cold War liberalism, will live on only in the museum of self-serving elite ideologies. The misnamed welfare state, in which surplus workers ended up segregated and dehumanized, will have been replaced by something much better—or much worse.

There's the rub. For while it is clear that George Bush's defeat marked the end of one era, what lies ahead cannot

yet be told. In electing Bill Clinton to the presidency, the American people have opened doors that have been bolted shut for decades. They have created opportunities by choosing change, but they have been given only the foggiest notion of what that change might be.

In his cabinet selections and in his early policy statements, President-elect Clinton has perpetuated all the ambiguities embodied in his campaign strategy. Taken as a whole, Clinton's cabinet appointments are a mixed bag. Ethnically and socially they are much more representative of the American people than any previous president's cabinet—just as Clinton promised. But key policy-making positions have been filled with people

Progressive reform won't be won by relying on the good will of Clinton insiders. It will require a large-scale social movement.

who have differed little, if at all, with the operating principles and policies of the Reagan-Bush era.

The new treasury secretary, Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, for example, has been a friend and ally of the savings and loan industry, and has supported virtually all of the pro-corporate tax and military policies of recent administrations.

Similarly, the new defense secretary, Rep. Les Aspin, who was elected as an opponent of the Vietnam War, has gradually come to accept all the assumptions and military policies of the Reagan years. As chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Aspin became ever cozier with the military contractors who came to be his biggest supporters. As a champion of those who have done the most to arm the world—and help undermine America's well-being—Aspin is an unlikely candidate to chart a new military or foreign policy course.

And then there's Zoe Baird, Clinton's new attorney general, the first woman to hold that important job. Baird is a close friend of Clinton's and a vice president and general counsel of the Aetna Life and Casualty Company, one of the nation's largest insurance companies. During the presidential campaign, Baird was an informal adviser to Clinton on health care issues. This helps explain why the new president has been so friendly toward a "managed competition" health care plan that would protect the insurance industry at the expense of the 35.4 million Americans who now have no coverage and the millions more who are inadequately insured.

Then, too, Clinton comes into office with heavy obligations to the corporate funders of his campaign, and to the neoconservative members of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), which developed Clinton's election strategy of sounding tough on military and foreign policy matters and of distancing himself from labor and the needs of the African-American community.

Clinton, however, seems less ideologically committed to neoconservative principles than some of his DLC comrades. On many issues he took the neoconservative line, but in a way that appeared to come more out of a feeling of tactical necessity than principle.

Despite his immersion in the technical details of policy, Clinton seems to have few deeply held beliefs or commitments. He has assembled a group of advisers who represent a wide range of interests. But big-money lobbyists, military contractors and insurance companies—as well as Clinton's early supporters—have the inside track.

Amazingly, though, many on the left are now counseling quiet support and obsequious supplication from the outer edges of the inner circle, rather than mobilization of popular support for their beliefs and programs. The trade union leaders who are soft-pedaling their preference for single-payer health care come to mind. But they are only one group of many.

The lesson here is that Clinton's election offers progressive forces an unusual opportunity, but not much more than that. Sitting back to wait for the new leader to take us to the promised land will be suicidal. The less popular mobilization and pressure is put on the new administration, the more certain it is that things will change only marginally. ◀

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(ISSN 0160-5992)

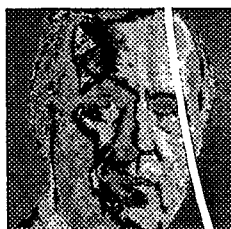
Published 26 times a year by Institute for Public Affairs,
 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647, (312) 772-
 0100. Member: Alternative Press Syndicate The entire
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 Times* are available from University Microfilms
 International, Ann Arbor, MI. Selected articles are
 available on 4-track cassette from Freedom Ideas
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 Alternative Press Index and the Left Index. Publisher
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 material. Manuscripts or material unaccompanied by
 stamped, self-addressed envelope will not be returned.
 All correspondence should be sent to: *In These Times*,
 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.
 Subscriptions are \$34.95 a year (\$59 for institutions;
 \$31.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). For customer service
 and to place subscription orders, call toll free: (800) 827-
 0270. Advertising rates sent on request. Available back
 issues are \$5 each; specify volume and number. All
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 IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send
 address changes to *In These Times*, 1912 Debs Ave., Mt.
 Morris, IL 61054.
 This issue (Vol. 17, No. 4) published Jan. 11, 1993, for
 newsstand sales Jan. 11 - 24, 1993.



InTHESETIMES

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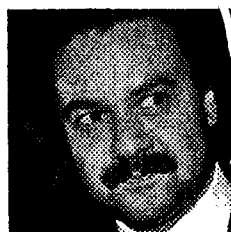
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The final affront
*A look at George Bush's
 unpardonable acts.*

JOEL BLEIFUSS

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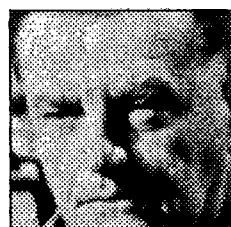


A shaky cabinet

*The powerbrokers on Wall Street and K Street
 were big winners in the appointment process.*

JOHN B. JUDIS

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Dead weightlessness

Hoffa is a dud.

PAT DOWELL

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LETTERS

Indumbnification

David Moberg is *wrong* (ITT, Dec. 14). As an educator, I think every day about how costly and difficult it is to make people smart. Fortunately, with casino gambling coming to the rescue of states as a way to pay for education, I won't have to worry any more. It can now be more cost effective to make them stupid.

As everybody knows, casinos make money in direct proportion to their customers' ignorance—ignorance of the laws of probability, the value of money and time, and the risks of an insidious habit. Unfortunately, a lot of our expensive school curriculum, even that part recommended by task forces of our economic leaders, is based on the development of intelligence. But now we can in good conscience create

the losers whose bad bets will fund education.

I can safely recommend some changes to my teachers-to-be. For example, right now, the study of mathematics includes statistics and probability. Scrap it. To fatten casino coffers we've got to develop citizens who can't understand the odds against winning over the short, much less the long, run. They've got to be kids who'll grow up to bite when the stickman says "try those hardways, pardner!," citizens who'll always draw to a hard 17, who'll sit for hours at the impossibility that's Keno, or get carpal tunnel syndrome bucking the odds at one-armed bandits.

In Health and Psychology we'll have to develop new family devastation guidelines. It can't be dysfunctional for dad to hock the silverware. And

think of the new elementary school possibilities. An updated primer: "See Dad and Mom fight. Dad and Mom fight loud. Dad drives off fast in the car. Dad pawns (new word) the TV.

Guy B. Senese

Department of Leadership
and Educational Policy Studies
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Ill.

Addendum

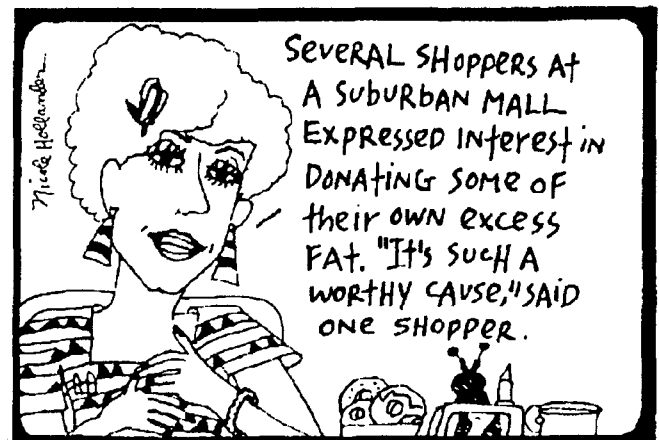
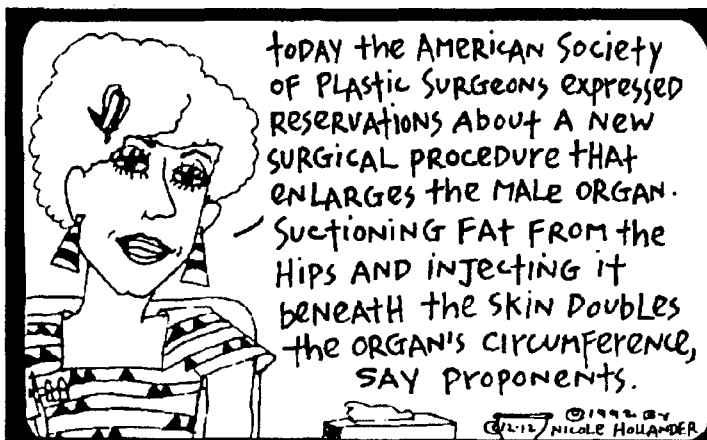
The November 11 article on the New Party did not include our address or telephone number. While we have great respect for the average ITT reader, we think this will make it substantially more difficult for anyone to write or call. So, for the record, the New Party National Office is located at 720 Monroe Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 795-2013. Any reader interested in joining a local organizing drive or, more generally, learning about what Jay Walljasper of the *Utne Reader* describes as a party that "aims to forge a unified force of environmentalists, feminists, labor, minorities and average citizens sick of the status quo" should contact us. We don't promise anything but the opportunity to change American politics from the ground up.

Sandy Pope & Daniel Cantor
National Organizers

P.S. We still need furniture.

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



"Trolly folly" folly

The light rail transit (LRT) system that has been proposed for Chicago's expanding central area is inaccurately referred to as a "quaint lakefront trolly" that will run only between McCormick Place and Navy Pier ("Etc.," Nov. 30). The Circulator will be much more than that. This system will traverse the length and width of the central area of Chicago and will complement the CTA and Metra rail networks by taking riders from the Loop stations to their varied and far-flung central-area destinations.

Projections are that 77 percent of the Circulator trips will be work-related. In fact, the genesis of this ambitious project came from central-area leaders who recognized that the continued economic vitality and health of the area and, ultimately, the city of Chicago and the region depends on maintaining the attractiveness of and easing transit through the central area.

They understood, from looking at the competition and from examining the fate of cities that had not modernized during the 20 years of highway and suburban growth, that without addressing the transportation needs and desires of employers and employees, Chicago's central area and neighborhoods were at risk.

Marilyn Katz
Consultant to the Central Area
Circulator Project, Chicago

Time to retire?

What a sad day for the once-proud National Toxics Campaign (NTC). Not long after your article came out (*ITT*, Oct. 28), I received a copy of the damage-control package circulated from the NTC office. If this is what they have come to, it is time to close the door. If, as they claim, power and effectiveness are truly in the hands of the grass-roots people, the work can continue without the cruel, fragile and frantic egos of these "leaders." The slanders and libels Executive Director Gary Cohen attempts to paste on for-

mer Western Director Adrienne Anderson are, ironically, an apt description of his own conduct.

I'm not a player in this shabby drama, but I know a little about it. I am a private investigator in the field of white-collar crime. Two weeks after the FBI's 1989 raid on Rocky Flats, I was asked, by benefactors of the NTC, to investigate a bizarre series of events disrupting the life and work of Adrienne Anderson.

What I found was astounding in both its origin and its malevolence. The whole story is too complex to recite here, but my overall finding was that not only was there an organized campaign attempting to undermine and discredit Anderson's work with local grass-roots groups, but that this campaign was being waged because she was a wholly rational and very effective organizer of victims of toxic crimes. The threat she represented to the polluters was in terms of billions of dollars in potential liability settlements. The NTC has long held up Adrienne Anderson as a model of strength and integrity. That they now seek to discredit her is the result of the intoxication of their power trips.

Robert D. Carey
Cambridge, Mass.

Fatalistic

The progressive movement will have to do better than Douglas D. Noble did (*ITT*, Nov. 30) if we are to help steer education reform in this country. To say that corporate America will impose its "brutally utilitarian" concept of management on the public schools is to look at only part of the educational equation—and to do so in a heavily ideological way.

Noble is not wrong that corporate leaders are taking on a greater role in education reform, but so are unions, educators of many political stripes, non-profits, parents and students. To paint a picture of big business devouring public education is premature and fatalistic.

First, corporate America is not a monolith. David Kearns of Xerox,

now deputy secretary of education, is right-wing and favors more privatization of schools, "tougher" requirements on students. But Apple Computer's John Sculley comes out of Silicon Valley and a far more enlightened corporate culture. Apple's work with interactive computing in classrooms is a useful program.

Restructuring, which Noble condemns as an attempt to impose downsizing and technological productivity gains on school children, is not that at all. Schools I've visited that are undertaking restructuring are engaged in a fascinating experiment to transfer decision-making from central bureaucracies to schools and classrooms. Done right, restructuring could empower students, parents and teachers—education's grass roots—and sharply limit micromanagement by remote central boards.

What's troubling about Noble's piece is, well, for want of a clearer word, its sense of "bigness": AT&T, IBM, RJR Nabisco are so huge they're just going to roll right over our children, and our schools will be remade in their image.

It makes good copy. I guess it's a useful warning. But it's not the language of struggle. And struggle is what's going on in public school systems all over the country right now. If you go in there and really look, there are whole bunches of parents on school-based management committees, teachers in restructuring workshops, community activists running after-school programs. Of course, there are reactionaries—quite a few, too, but they're not in the vanguard yet. Let's not cede it to them before the battle is over.

Masie McAdoo
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you wished to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

IN SHORT



BAD NEWS

African and Caribbean nations face AIDS crisis in the '90s

Southern Asia, the Caribbean and South America. But the report went largely unnoticed. Several of president-elect Bill Clinton's advisers urged the candidate to publicize the report but he demurred.

According to the report, AIDS' "worldwide impact during the 1990s will be five to 10 times that of the 1980s." The report estimates that about two-thirds of the new AIDS cases will occur in Africa compared to only one-tenth in North America. While in the industrial countries AIDS "will remain predominantly a disease of the poor," it will affect all parts of the African population, including the political elites. By 2000, between 10 and 30 percent of

Last summer the State Department issued a grim report, *The Global AIDS Disaster: Implications for the 1990s*, that predicted the rapid acceleration of the AIDS epidemic in Sub-Saharan Africa,



by Woody Igou

First-class treatment

The *Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph* reports that 19 months after a United Airlines



flight attendant died in a plane crash, the company sent her family a bill for

\$411.56. The airline said that was how much the woman owed for the uniform she had died in.

I hope they don't find out that she spilled a drink on the way down!

Damnable draculeless

The *Orlando Sentinel* reports that a 21-year-old mother repeatedly bit her two-year-old child in an effort to give the child AIDS. She told the police she wanted to infect



the baby so that the child's grandmother would no longer be able to take

care of her. She has been charged with attempted murder.

"The devil is an optimist if he thinks he can make people meaner." —Karl Kraus

History in a trash compactor

The *New York Times* reports that the '80s nostalgia movement has already begun. A host of one '80s party stated, "We played all this music peo-

ple didn't remember any more." Decorations included a poster of Mary Lou



Retton.

A frightening thought: pop icons are now permanently

relevant. No need for Vanilla Ice to disappear—he can just go straight to the revival circuit.

More than a coincidence?

In Sun City, South Africa, young women in long hair, nail polish and tight-fitting dresses recently competed for the Miss World title in a



country racked by racial atrocities. Meanwhile, in

Liberia, young men in long wigs, cartoon masks, nail polish and wedding dresses were committing atrocities and murder, according to a recent *Economist*.

Did Joseph Conrad mention fashion?

Freudian slip

"Ted Turner would have a fit if he heard anything left-



wing on CNN." —

Michael (I'm not a leftist but I play one

on television) Kinsley to John Sununu, *Crossfire*, Sept. 1, 1992.

We know, Mike, we know.

APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Weightless banality
2. Green Acres stupid
3. Malicious cretinism
4. Howard Sternesque
5. Mary Matalin mean
6. Gangrenous venality
7. A touch of evil
8. A cancer in the Zeitgeist
9. Retu, Pol Pot?
10. Korseperson of the Apocalypse

the population will be infected, and infection rates among young urban adults could reach 40 percent."

As the report explains, the epidemic could have grave economic implications in these countries. It would not only exhaust national budgets and foreign aid and discourage tourism as a source of income, but also strike at members of the working population during their most productive years. It could cast doubt upon public investment in higher education. "As AIDS reduces school graduates' working lives, the payoff to investment in education is greatly reduced. Policy-makers will face the grim question: why spend money training people who are likely to die before the cost of specialized instruction can be recouped?"

The report even hints that the epidemic could cripple the country's ruling elites. "Leaders who themselves contract the disease may undergo behavioral change secondary to 'AIDS dementia,'" the report says. The report tells of one minister of health from an African nation who had himself contracted AIDS but who steadfastly refused to take the AIDS epidemic seriously. Only after his death did the country begin an AIDS prevention program.

AIDS has already afflicted some Caribbean countries, including Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, as much as it has Africa. During the '90s, the report predicts, the epidemic will begin to decimate Brazil, Thailand and India. "If the Indian government does not take meaningful steps to counter AIDS during the next five years," the report warns, "the epidemic will likely grow to Africa-like proportions in 10 to 15 years."

—John B. Judis

A JUST ENVIRONMENT

Melding the movements to make a difference

If the term environmentalist conjures up an image of a flannel-clad mountain man or an Ivy League liberal lobbyist, think again. If you believe civil rights and the environment are two separate issues, you're out of date.

A new breed of individuals and organizations can now be found under the umbrella of "environmental justice." The addition of "justice" is key. The movement calls for political democracy, health care, housing and multi-cultural education as well as clean air, land and water.

The movement's top priorities are a moratorium on polluting industries in communities of color, and a national jobs program to clean up hazardous sites that endanger people nearby. Its ranks are swelled by low-income people who have experienced environmental devastation first-hand. And its leaders stress that the movement must be led by people of color, must be inclusive of all races and must involve youth participation.

Born in 1983 when black residents of Warren County, N.C., lay down in the street to prevent PCB-laden trucks from entering their community, the environmental justice movement showed its strength in New Orleans last month with a well-attended conference mounted by the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice (SOC).

The African-Americans, American Indians, Latinos, Asians and whites who attended the conference included long-time activists and newcomers to political organizing. Scanning the audience, Isaiah Madison, director of the Durham, N.C.-based Institute for Southern Studies, shook his head in wonder. "You will not easily find the span, diversity, depth of experience and passion you find here." Some 1,500 people attended—about 1,000 more than were

expected.

"I think we are now on the verge of a massive new movement at the grass-roots in the south," said civil rights veteran Anne Braden, co-chair of SOC. "Environmental justice has touched a central nerve. People know it's a life-and-death issue and they sense it's a unifying issue. It's similar to the movement that came out of the South in the '60s. Like the battle against segregation, it has the potential to transform this country." —Robin Epstein

MORTAL TURTLES

*Will Clinton save the
Ninja's cousins?*

Are sea turtles going the way of dinosaurs? Today seven species of sea turtles cruise the Earth's oceans. And six of them are heading for extinction—including one of which

there are only 500 nesting females—thanks in part to the Bush administration's refusal to enforce the Endangered Species Act.

On the altar of unrestrained trade, the U.S. State Department is sacrificing some 155,000 sea turtles a year. "This represents the largest killing of sea turtles in the world right now," says Todd Steiner, director of Earth Island Institute's Sea Turtle Restoration Project.

The turtles are drowned by foreign shrimping fleets when they get caught in the long nets the shrimpers drag across the ocean floor. Technology exists to prevent much of the slaughter, and shrimpers who do not use it are barred from importing their catch into the U.S. But the bloody business continues.

"It's criminal that the Bush administration is allowing this to happen," says Steiner, "after we have spent 10 years perfecting the technology to allow fishermen to efficiently catch shrimp without harming the turtles."

Since 1989, the U.S. shrimping fleet has been equipped with turtle excluder devices, known as TEDs. That same year Congress passed a law banning the importation of shrimp from countries that do not meet U.S. sea turtle protection standards—i.e. any foreign fishing fleets that catch shrimp with nets that are not equipped with TEDs.

Although the ban went into effect on May 1, 1991, the State Department has refused to enforce it. The reason is money—other people's, and lots of it. As Secretary of State James Baker explained to Congress in November 1990: "Because four of the five [sea turtle species covered by the Endangered Species Act] are known to occur worldwide, this law, if given the broadest possible interpretation, could affect shrimp imports from more than 80 countries totaling as much as \$1.8 billion—more than 75 percent [by value] of all shrimp consumed in this country. The impact of the resulting embargoes would be unprecedented—both internationally and domestically." And what would the lobbyists serve at their cocktail parties?

Last February, the Earth Island Institute, the group that spearheaded the save-the-dolphin campaign, filed suit in federal court against the State and Commerce Departments for refusing to implement the turtle protection law and thereby abetting the slaughter of sea turtles.

"The facts are clear," says Earth Island Institute attorney Elizabeth Gunther. "The secretaries of commerce and state are willing to sacrifice these magnificent animals, in clear violation of the law, to protect big business."

In the next few weeks, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals will rule on whether the suit can continue. The State Department is arguing that because Earth Island Institute and Congress are talking about banning the importation of shrimp the case should be heard in the Court of International Trade in New

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

Lights! Camera! War!

After the Marines' pre-dawn landing in Somalia was captured by the glaring lights of video cameras on all sides, people roundly criticized "the media" for imperiling a military mission. What the media were most guilty of, however, was following the military's orders. "The Pentagon wanted it timed to be on the evening news and it was," complained David Bartlett, the head of the Radio-TV News Directors Association.

The Pentagon had more than one objective when it pointedly invited major media to the event. Besides the immediate boost in support for the mission that coverage implies, the military also, according to *Advertising Age*, hopes the publicity will improve recruiting. The advertising budget for recruitment has been more than halved since 1986, when it peaked. Bill Clinton's plans to further shrink the military may mean more cuts.

All in the Family I

The world's largest media conglomerate, Time Warner, is finally finding the synergy in its sprawling holdings. Warner Books is launching a broad marketing plan in which it will place ads for its best-selling books in publications such as *Time*, *People*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and an in-store marketing company called Media One—all owned by Time Warner. Naturally, Warner Books gets a price break.

All in the Family II

Like other newspaper publishers, the *Washington Post* has a book-publishing division, the *Washington Post Co. Briefing Books*. Like a good topical publisher, the division is pushing a hot title: *Banking on the Brink*. So if the banking crisis is in the news, should the newspaper mention the book? The *Post* didn't stop with a mention. In the business section: two articles and a column, a follow-up piece leading with the authors' response to criticism and a prominent op-ed piece by the authors. The assistant managing editor, faced with the implications of self-promotion, suggested reaming the publishing division to avoid confusion—or, some might say, recognition of self-interest.

By the Way

Those looking for ways that media shape our understanding of the world, but too busy to scour the margins of mainstream media to find them, will appreciate the new bimonthly *Media Culture Review* (Institute for Alternative Journalism, 100 E. 85th St., New York, NY 10028), an anthology of journalism from alternative newspapers and magazines (including this one). Among the latest issue's topics (drawn from publications ranging from *Index on Censorship* to *Spectrum Weekly* (Little Rock, Ark.): Minnesota's anti-smoking TV ads; right-wing talk show host Rush Limbaugh's draft record; Hallmark cards' new market—people in recovery; and more.

© Pat Aufderheide

York rather than in federal court. Of course, after January 20 Bill Clinton could step in to save the turtles. Whether he does so will be an environmental litmus test for the new administration.

—Joel Bleifuss

ANTI-GAY IN '94

Homophobes having a gay old time with ballot initiatives

If you thought Christian-right homophobes have had enough, think again. The people who put so-called "special rights for homosexuals" to a vote in the last election—with mixed results—are already gearing up for 1994.

The success of Colorado's anti-gay referendum in November convinced Lon Mabon, head of the fundamentalist Oregon Citizens' Alliance (OCA), to put a "Colorado-style" measure on the 1994 ballot in his home state. Oregon voters rejected a similar, but more offensively written initiative in November. Mabon figures the softer language will help slide the initiative through in Oregon and other states, where he has threatened to expand his campaign.

In one of those states, Washington, conservative leader Cathy Mickels outlined the Christian right's logic, saying, "It's not right that we hire people and give them protection and special preference ... based on sexual orientation." In Idaho, relocated former OCA vice-chairman Kelly Walton said a 1994 anti-gay ballot initiative is "becoming a necessary thing." Walton said he could easily "organize a grass-roots army" to oppose gay rights legislation and to counter activity by groups such as Queer Nation, which he claims seek to influence children. In Florida, the state chapter of the American Families Association has organized successfully to overturn one municipal gay rights ordinance and is reportedly initiating a drive for a statewide referendum.

Gay activists in Missouri expect a referendum bid from fundamentalist organizers to counter newly elected Gov. Mel Carnahan's support for a repeal of the state's anti-sodomy Sexual Misconduct Law. In Ohio, "family-values" groups are meeting to decide whether to launch an initiative to prevent gay rights legislation. Phil Burrell, head of Cincinnati's Citizens for Community Values, said a drive could start as early this year, but that it depended on "what the other side's ultimate goal is."

Increasingly, anti-gay organizers are focusing on voters' economic insecurities by disguising protection against discrimination as preferential treatment for homosexuals. Polling suggests that Colorado voters eradicated sexual orientation-based civil rights protection because they were persuaded by the group Colorado for Family Values' emphasis on "no special rights for homosexuals," including talk of "quotas." In Oregon, however, voters rejected a strongly worded initiative that would have classified homosexuality as "abnormal, wrong, unnatural and perverse."

As local and national Christian-right groups step up their anti-gay campaigns, the incoming Clinton administration could fight back by supporting the decades-old Federal Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights Act, which would supersede any local or state measure. In the meantime, Colorado has been hit by a boycott, and Amendment 2 faces a series of court challenges, including one from the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund and American Civil Liberties Union lawyers, who are claiming that Amendment 2 violates equal protection under the U.S. Constitution.

—Scott Straus

WORKED TO DEATH

*Joe Kinney champions
a safe work environment*

burying their 15-year-old son.

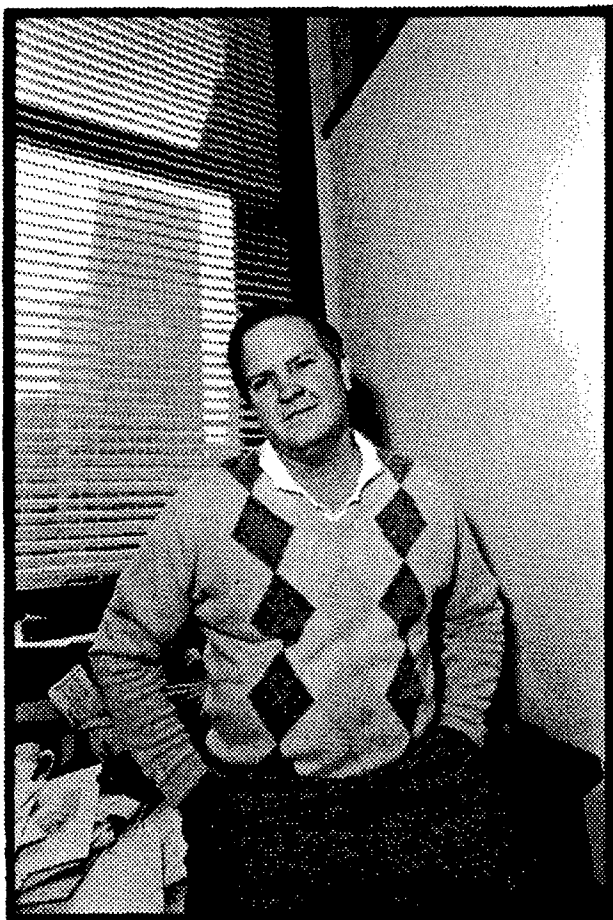
This is just one story from a report released by Joe Kinney's Chicago-based National Safe Workplace Institute (NSWI). The report, *Sacrificing America's Youth*, points out that America's adolescent workers are being "injured, maimed and killed in alarming numbers."

Kinney has made it his mission to publicize stories of workplace "carnage." He never knew the extent of such dangers, until 1986 when his brother Paul,

26, fell from a 30-foot scaffold that collapsed while he was setting up fireworks. Paul suffered a brain stem hemorrhage and died two days later. Joe Kinney sat by his bed in a Denver hospital, but Paul never regained consciousness.

Investigating that death, Kinney discovered that the accident could have been avoided. The scaffold had been improperly constructed by high-school kids. During its investigation the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), however, refused to consider the information Kinney unearthed. In the end, OSHA fined the employer \$800.

Through his research, Kinney



Bill Stamets

became convinced that safety problems were an epidemic requiring action. Setting up a not-for-profit institute was not his first thought. "I wanted to find a way to buy my way out of it, to create a scholarship in my brother's name or to do this or that," he says. "But when I'd close my eyes, I'd see the names of people

At a 7-Up plant in Virginia a forklift overturns, crushing its teenage driver. The driver remained conscious for a few hours before dying. His parents took 7-Up to court, but their only compensation was money to cover the cost of

ETC.

By Glenora Croucher

Tax burden

Political conservatives and others often accuse African-Americans of placing unfair burdens on U.S. taxpayers by their disproportionate dependence on public programs. But according to a recently released report, African-American taxpayers also shoulder an unfair burden.

The report, entitled *Fair Taxes: Still a Dream for African-Americans*, was prepared by the A. Philip Randolph Institute, a liberal Washington-based group. The study concluded that the past decade witnessed a fundamental shift in tax policy away from working people and toward the interests of the very rich. And, "when government tax policy takes aim at low- and middle-class families, it hits [African-Americans] particularly hard."

The study presents graphic detail of not only how the rich got richer at the expense of the low- and middle-income, but also how the rich paid fewer taxes. For example, the study details how African-American families pay a higher percentage of their income in consumer excise taxes and federal payroll taxes than do wealthier, mostly white families.

"The poorest Americans will pay over 40 percent more of their income in excise taxes in 1992 than they paid in 1980," the study notes. "But the richest 1 percent were effectively exempted from this move toward higher federal consumer excise taxes." (Salim Muwakkil)

Major blow-off

President-elect Bill Clinton couldn't make time for tea with British Prime Minister John Major last month when the Conservative Party leader visited Washington. And that's understandable.

Though Major requested the post-election meeting, Tory strategists did their pre-election best to ensure that such a meeting would never have to take place. When Major saw his White House buddy trailing badly after the GOP convention last August, he dispatched top Conservative strategists to plot a come-from-behind Republican victory.

Britain's Conservative Central Office shipped video footage of party broadcasts, news reports, analyses of opinion polls and political ads to the Republicans. The strategists also conducted seminars for Bush campaign officials outlining how Major outsmarted the pollsters—and even surprised himself—with his return to No. 10 Downing St.

The Tories also advised the Republicans to investigate Clinton's anti-Vietnam activity at Oxford—and even conducted a search of confidential immigration files to determine whether Clinton applied for British citizenship to avoid the draft.

The Republicans didn't need any help coming up with dirty tricks, but Major probably looked at his stuttering American counterpart and figured, "a friend in need..."

But after Britain's unprecedented involvement in U.S. partisan politics, Major will have to prove to Clinton that he's a friend, indeed.

who paid the price of death and that became less of an alternative." So Kinney quit his business consulting job and in 1987 founded NSWI, which began operations from his Chicago apartment.

Paul's death and similar tragedies he has documented during his research revived the horror and rage he felt after being shot in the chest as a Marine in Vietnam. "I had this incredible fear that when they opened my flak jacket I would fall apart, disintegrate," says Kinney. "Sometimes bullets would dance around inside people and make mincemeat out of them, and when they'd open their flak jackets their arms would fall off.

"Before going to Vietnam a huge percentage of people in my platoon had been indicted for everything up to manslaughter. For them the corps was a refuge, slightly better than jail. We were incredibly disenfranchised, wretched human beings fighting other wretched human beings."

Kinney noted that a similar dynamic is at play in the issues of workplace safety. Just as the soldiers in Vietnam died because of a bad foreign policy, workers in the United States, especially the disenfranchised, die each day because of poor workplace safety. "My role," says Kinney, "is to have people see that the system is divisive, destructive, antidemocratic and serves only the interests of greed and corruption."

The primary weapons in Kinney's fight to prevent future workplace tragedies are the hard-hitting reports he compiles for NSWI. Based on government statistics, court documents and his own research, Kinney estimates that 11,000 Americans die on the job each year and 9 million more are injured. Of those 9 million, about 70,000 are left permanently disabled. Americans are five times more likely to be killed or injured at work than the Swedes and three times more likely than the Japanese.

The NSWI's child labor report found that in 1990 at least 139 youths were killed and 71,000 injured in work-related accidents. The number of working teens has grown steadily since 1964. By 1990, 5.5 million teens between the ages of 12 and 17, or 28 percent of that population, were working at least part time. This figure disturbs Kinney. "Our society is putting teenagers at a competitive disadvantage," he says. "German and Japanese children are at home studying while our kids are flipping hamburgers."

Last October, the Bush administration proposed new federal regulations that would permit 14- and 15-year-olds to work 20 hours per week (now 18) and until 8 p.m. (now 7 p.m.). Kinney has no doubt that the administration pushed through this deregulation at the behest of the fast-food corporations that have built an empire exploiting the cheap labor of teens and minorities.

"If we can't win this battle when it involves children, how are we going to win it when it involves anybody else?" asks Kinney. But NSWI has chalked up some victories in five years. Kinney is proud of the fact that input from victims and their families is now a standard part of OSHA inquiries, though not to the extent he would like. And since Kinney has been on the job, OSHA's annual fine collections have, he says, increased from \$7 million to \$53 million.

To be as fully absorbed in the issue as he would have to be to succeed, Kinney promised himself when he founded NSWI that he would devote himself to the cause for just 10 years and then walk away and leave the institute to others. He's still got five years to go.

"I look at this like some football players look at playing football," he says. "They know they've got only so many games. If they had to do this forever, they wouldn't go out and play because their bodies couldn't stand the brutality. And my life is brutal."

—Mike Ervin

T H E F I R S T S T O N E

BEGGING YOUR PRESIDENTIAL PARDON

By Joel Bleifuss

On Christmas Eve, George Bush pardoned six former administration officials for Iran-contra connected crimes. The four who already had been convicted are now ex-cons. The two officials who had been indicted and were awaiting trial have now escaped that very public ordeal. Consequently, Lawrence Walsh, the Iran-contra independent prosecutor, can take advantage of his newly opened schedule to focus his prosecutorial energies on an as-yet-unindicted Iran-contra player, the president himself.

Walsh, a retired federal judge and registered Republican from Oklahoma, has indicated that Bush is now a "subject" of his investigation. And he has strongly hinted that the president could become a target for indictment. In an angry response to the pardons, Walsh stated that the presidential grant of clemency "demonstrates that powerful people with powerful allies can commit serious crimes in high office—deliberately abusing the public trust without consequence. ... The Iran-contra cover-up, which has continued for more than six years, has now been completed." Bush's Christmas Eve pardons neatly fit what Walsh described as "a disturbing pattern of deception and obstruction that permeated the highest levels of the Reagan and Bush administrations."

The timing of the pardons was obstructionist. As Ted Koppel wryly observed on the Christmas Eve edition of *Nightline*: "If you want to bury a story in this town, or at least ensure that it gets the least possible attention, issue a written statement rather than going on camera, and do it on Christmas Eve when people are distracted, out of town and usually disengaged until after the New Year."

The pardoning proclamation itself was deceptive. Bush explained that the men he pardoned committed "misdeeds or errors in judgment" that were motivated by "patriotism." He granted executive clemency to former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, former National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane, former Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams, and three of the president's former colleagues at the CIA—Clair George, Alan Fiers and Duane Clarridge. Bush went on to portray these patriots, with their "record of long and distinguished service to this country,"

as the victims of a "profoundly troubling development in the political and legal climate of our country: the criminalization of policy differences."

Bush is deluded: the real danger is not "the criminalization of policy differences," but a tendency of rogue government officials to cover up their policy blunders with lies. The six men Bush pardoned were not charged with committing bad policy. Four had been convicted on a total of 10 counts of lying to Congress, and two, Weinberger and Clarridge, had been charged but not tried on 13 counts of lying to Congress.

Did Bush, touched by the Christmas spirit, take pity on these co-conspirators and let them off the hook? Or were his pardons a hasty attempt to cut bait and thus avoid closer inspection of his own Iran-contra contradictions?

Walsh's case against Bush can be built around three sets of documents that have surfaced in the past year. These documents could well contradict Bush's sworn 1988 testimony to Walsh about the Iran-contra affair. If they do, Bush could soon be tried for perjury.

First there was the discovery of Weinberger's daily notes detailing the development of the administration's 1985 arms-for-hostages deal with Iran. In an entry about a January 7, 1986, White House meeting at which the arms-for-hostages deal was discussed, Weinberger wrote, "President decided to go with Israeli-Iranian offer to release our 5 hostages in return for sale of 4000 TOWs to Iran by Israel—George Shultz + I opposed—Bill Casey, Ed Meese + VP favored—as did Poindexter." This clearly contradicts Bush's public assertion that he was out of the loop and only learned the details of the deal when the scandal became public.

The second document indicating Bush lied is a February 1987 memo prepared by the late Israeli anti-terrorism expert Amiram Nir for Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. In an 11-page memo titled, "The Publication of the Meeting with Vice President of the United States," Nir recounted his July 1986 meeting with Bush in Jerusalem in which the hostage deal was discussed in detail. Later that year, Tower Commission investigators questioned Bush about that meeting. According to the commission report, Bush told them, "There was no discussion of specifics relating to arms going to the Iranians." This past October excerpts from that memo were broadcast by *Nightline*. As producers Tara Sonenshine and Jay LaMonica observed in a subsequent *New York Times* op-ed piece, "[Bush's] latest statements contradict what he said in the past, and attempts by the White House to clarify his statements further muddy the waters. Mr. Nir's notes, combined with other evidence, clearly confirm that Mr. Bush did play a part in the arms-for-hostages deal of the Iran-contra affair. He may not have

been the lead, but he certainly had a supporting role, one which he has so far failed adequately to explain."

Finally, there is the president's own diary, which entered the public spotlight during Walsh's official response to Bush's Christmas Eve pardons. The special prosecutor revealed that the White House had recently turned over portions of a Bush diary that implicates the president in the Iran-contra cover-up. Said Walsh, "This office was informed only within the past two weeks, on December 11, that President Bush had failed to produce to investigators his own highly relevant contemporaneous notes [the diary], despite repeated requests for such documents. The production of these notes is still ongoing and will lead to appropriate action. In light of President Bush's own misconduct [in withholding his daily diary], we are gravely concerned about his decision to pardon others who lied to Congress and obstructed official investigations."

A spokesman for Walsh cited the special prosecutor's Christmas Eve appearance on *Nightline* as providing the best indication of where Walsh would next probe. In his interview with Ted Koppel, Walsh said that he was not willing to accuse Bush of criminal conduct until he has examined all of the president's daily notes, a crucial month of which is still being withheld by the White House. Yet Walsh did say, "I do not understand how such a reservoir of contemporaneous records could be withheld from the Congress and from us, but we will find out."

Koppel then asked why Bush would suddenly release those notes, after holding on to them for several years. The following exchange ensued.

Walsh: "My first cynical thought was, 'It's after the election.' And the second thing is that if he's going to pardon Mr. Weinberger, he knows there's going to be no forthcoming Weinberger trial, which could add to the exposure of the cover-up, and that perhaps this is a time in which [the release of the diary] could be done with minimum damage to him. A third reason is that it was totally accidental."

Koppel: "Let me be more cynical even than you were. If you really want to cover something up, why not just hold on to those notes, [because] essentially the statute of limitations has run out."

Walsh: "The statute of limitations has run out on the substantive crime, on the cover-up itself. The statute of limitations can always be revived by a false statement under oath."

Koppel: "And would such a false statement, for example, be that con-

poraneous notes did not exist when it now turns out that they did?"

Walsh: "If such a statement were made. But ... I have gone further than I should in discussing the matter, which is still under investigation."

Walsh went on to tell Koppel that if Bush did not give his office the missing notes, he would subpoena them. Further, Walsh said, "It may well be that President Bush has succeeded in a form of Saturday night massacre. You may remember that President Nixon had Archie Cox fired when he got too close to the presidency. [The pardons] may be a more subtle way of closing down an investigation, but we have not yet accepted that conclusion."

As Walsh has hinted, a case against the soon-to-be ex-president could be based on the fact that Bush lied to Congress and the independent counsel about the existence of his diary. That may explain why Bush, in his pardoning proclamation, wrote, "While no impartial person has seriously suggested that my own role in this matter is legally questionable, I have further requested that the independent counsel provide me with a copy of my sworn testimony to his office, which I am prepared to [publicly] release immediately."

Bush begs this question: does he desire a copy of his sworn testimony so that when Walsh next interviews him, he can keep his lies straight?

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



W H I T E H O U S E

Staff infection

A

Clinton's cabinet includes some disastrous choices in an area key to his presidency's health—the economy.

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON D.C.

n American president makes important decisions before taking office—picking his cabinet, establishing a relationship with Congress and staking out what issues he is going to emphasize. Bill Clinton has had a remarkably active transition period, highlighted by the two-day economic summit meeting. How has he done? And what can one learn from his appointments and early decisions of the kind of presidency he will have?

Clinton has been bold in his public political posture—in defining his relationship with the American public. The economic summit was a remarkable exercise in democracy. It was not the conventional political town meeting, in which the politician fields softball questions from an adoring audience, but much more like the early New England town meeting, in which the elect earnestly deliberate problems in all their complexity. It allowed Ameri-

cans (perhaps for the first time) to be privy to the full range of considerations that will guide Clinton in developing his economic program.

But Clinton's initial initiatives toward Congress and his major appointments were less impressive and suggested that he may be far less bold in his program than in his public relations. During his campaign, he promised to secure a line-item veto (that would allow him to veto items within a bill without vetoing the entire bill). Such a provision is not important for cutting the deficit, but it is useful for eliminating last-minute special favors secured by Washington lobbyists. Clinton also pledged to get Congress as well as the White House to reduce its enormous staff. Meeting with Senate Majority leader George Mitchell (D-ME) and House Speaker Tom Foley (D-WA), Clinton backed off on both promises.

Some of Clinton's appointments are impressive, but as a whole they bear out the control exercised over American politics by Wall Street and Washington's lawyer-lobbyists on K Street, on the one hand, and the post-'60s socially liberal interest groups of feminists, civil rights proponents and environmentalists, on the other hand. This unlikely combination has more or less controlled Washington since the mid-'70s no matter who was in the White House. Wall Street and K Street conspired to deflect Carter's economic populism, while the National Abortion Rights Action League, World Wildlife Federation, People for the American Way and Leadership Conference on Civil Rights foiled the Reaganite right's attempt to impose its environmental, racial and religious agenda. (I have described this peculiar coalition at greater length in "The Pressure Elite," published in *American Prospect*, Spring 1992.)

These interests were well represented in Clinton's cabinet choices. For example, he put a group of Wall Street financiers and K Street lawyer-lobbyists in charge of the Commerce Department, the Economic Security Council and the Treasury. And he chose environmentalists for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of the Interior, while naming five blacks, two Hispanics and eight women to high administration positions. The conservative social agenda could not be found among his appointees—indeed, not even the Democratic Leadership Council's positions on work and welfare. His choice at Health and Human Services (HHS) reflected the priorities of Hillary Clinton and the Children's Defense Fund.

But also conspicuously missing was the influence of the two groups that used to shape the Democratic Party—labor unions and Northern big city politicians. Clinton nominated a secretary of labor who was not recommended by the AFL-CIO and whose views on labor unions are not known. He



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Advisers (CEA)—if she can weather the condescending (and jealous) criticisms of her fellow economists. Tyson has made the clearest case of any academic economist (most recently in *Who's Bashing Whom?*) for the importance of nurturing American advanced technology industries—if necessary, through a managed trade strategy. But the chair of the CEA is an adviser without any formal power within the government. Clinton could probably not have done better than California Rep. Leon Panetta as director of the Office of Management and Budget and Alice Rivlin as Panetta's deputy. Panetta has the three qualifications necessary for the job—he is extraordinarily knowledgeable about the budget, he takes the deficit

chose former Denver Mayor Federico Peña, a Latino, over William Daley, an Irish-Catholic heir of the Chicago machine, for secretary of transportation. His cabinet represents the perfect marriage of the National Organization for Women (NOW), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and Goldman, Sachs.

Such a cabinet may be able to please official Washington, but it may run afoul of middle America. Most of the American electorate is more conservative on social issues than NOW and the Children's Defense Fund and more nationalist and populist in its economic outlook than a Wall Street investment banker or a K Street lobbyist.

Here is my rundown of some of Clinton's appointments. I've rated them as follows:

- ★★★★★ Outstanding
- ★★★★ Good
- ★★★ OK
- ★★ Questionable
- ★ Abysmal

★★★★★ Bruce Babbitt could become the best secretary of the interior since the Roosevelt administration's Harold Ickes. As governor of Arizona, Babbitt brilliantly navigated the shoals of Western water-rights disputes. Laura Tyson was an inspired choice for chair of the Council of Economic

Advisers (CEA)—if she can weather the condescending (and jealous) criticisms of her fellow economists. Tyson has made the clearest case of any academic economist (most recently in *Who's Bashing Whom?*) for the importance of nurturing American advanced technology industries—if necessary, through a managed trade strategy. But the chair of the CEA is an adviser without any formal power within the government. Clinton could probably not have done better than California Rep. Leon Panetta as director of the Office of Management and Budget and Alice Rivlin as Panetta's deputy. Panetta has the three qualifications necessary for the job—he is extraordinarily knowledgeable about the budget, he takes the deficit

seriously and he is a person of integrity who was fired from the Nixon administration because he refused to compromise his commitment to civil rights.

★★★★ Carol Browner, a protégée of Vice President-elect Albert Gore and a former Citizen Action official, could turn out to be an inspired choice as director of the Environmental Protection Agency. The big question is whether she has the experience and the clout to run this critical agency. Henry Cisneros seems a good choice as head of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, judging by his strong record when he was San Antonio's mayor. Rep. Mike Espy is likely to do as good a job as secretary of agriculture as he did representing the Mississippi Delta. South Carolinian Richard Riley, Clinton's choice as secretary of education, was the first Southern governor to convince voters to raise taxes to improve public schools. And Federico Peña, the incoming secretary of transportation, went a long way toward solving Denver's airport and auto smog problems. But note here again that Clinton gave the two appointments that most directly affect cities like Chicago, New York and Boston to two mayors from relatively new and prosperous Southwestern cities.

A defender of corporate globalism, Robert Reich would have been a disaster as CEA chairman, but he could make an interesting secretary of labor. While Reich doesn't think a corporation's nationality matters, he does worry about

who works in them and has devoted much of his writing to the importance of worker education and retraining. Through his visibility and close ties to Clinton, Reich could also revive a department that has been marginalized since the Kennedy administration. AFL-CIO officials were furious at Lane Kirkland for not lobbying Clinton to appoint one of their own. William Wynn, the president of the United Food and Commercial Workers, even sent a letter of protest to his fellow members on the executive council. But if the AFL-CIO can win Reich over to labor law reform, they'll be far better off than they would be with someone who was congenial to them, but whom Clinton would have been likely to ignore. Hazel O'Leary, the president of Northern States Power, may turn out to be one of Clinton's best appointments. O'Leary has experience in government and the power industry and appears committed to energy conservation rather than to the enrichment of the oil industry.

*** Zoe Baird may prove to be a wonderful attorney general, but she is a corporate attorney who on Aetna's behalf has championed a new anti-consumer law that would drastically limit claims in product liability suits. Donna Sha-

lala may also be fine as head of the Department of Health and Human Services, but the former college president may not have the proper experience to lead the struggle for universal health insurance. Her role in enforcing speech codes at the University of Wisconsin also suggests that she could embroil HHS in cultural wars that it can ill afford to fight.

** Clinton's foreign policy team is made up of Carter administration holdovers who have not displayed any particular innovation in conceiving America's post-Cold War role. On the plus side, they display strong support for human

rights. On the minus side, they display little familiarity with how the United States should operate in a world dominated by economic rather than military conflict. The best thing about Warren Christopher as secretary of state is that he is a cautious, disciplined man who is unlikely to plunge into a new international crusade. He is Dean Rusk without the Cold War. Wisconsin Rep. Les Aspin is highly intelligent and has played a constructive role in trying to envision a post-Cold War military. But as secretary of defense he is

probably too locked into the Pentagon and the Washington geopolitical establishment to press for radical changes in the military. Clinton's appointee as CIA director, James Woolsey, is also too closely tied to these groups. Clinton's choice for national security adviser, Anthony Lake, will probably defer decisions and discussions of international economics to his deputy, Samuel Berger. That might be unfortunate, because Berger, a high-priced lawyer at Washington's Hogan & Harston, has been one of Toyota's chief lobbyists in Washington. Texas Sen. Lloyd Bentsen can get things done as the treasury secretary, but the question is what he will do. Clinton has surrounded him with policymakers who will probably reinforce Bentsen's worst impulses to go along with whatever Wall Street wants.

* Few people in Washington have the political skills of Ron Brown. Brown deserved a high appointment, but putting him in charge of the Department of Commerce is like putting a polluter in charge of the EPA. A senior partner at the Washington firm of Patton, Boggs and Blow, Brown was a major lobbyist for foreign companies and governments, including the giants of the Japanese electronic industry and Haiti under "Baby Doc" Duvalier. He not only maintained his partnership in Patton, Boggs and Blow while serving as chairman of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), but used the chairmanship to secure clients and contracts and to enrich himself. (Anyone wanting to read the full story of Brown at the DNC should get *Private Parties*, published by the Center for Public Integrity in Washington.) Brown could turn out to be brilliant secretary of commerce in the same way that former Wall Street trader Joseph Kennedy turned out to be an outstanding first chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission. That remains to be seen. But by appointing Brown, Berger and lawyer-lobbyist Mickey Kantor to the post of U.S. trade representative, Clinton sent a clear message to Washington's K Street that it would be business as usual in his administration.

Clinton sent a very similar message to Wall Street when he appointed Robert Rubin as chairman of his new White House Economic Security Council and Roger Altman as Bentsen's deputy secretary of the treasury. As co-director of Goldman, Sachs & Co. (Clinton's largest single source of campaign funds), Rubin spent the last decade promoting and defending the most destructive practices of Wall Street. Altman, the vice chairman of the Blackstone Group, was in charge of getting Japanese and other foreign companies to take advantage of the weak dollar to buy up American companies. It would be hard to imagine two people less capable of directing and promoting a program to revitalize the American economy.

In all, Clinton made good or outstanding appointments to positions that affect social and environmental policy, questionable appointments to positions responsible for foreign and defense policy, and disastrous appointments to the key economic positions. This does not augur well for his administration, because the most important decisions he will make are those regarding the future of the economy. ◀

Clinton's appointments bear out the control over U.S. politics exercised by Wall Street and Washington's lawyer-lobbyists on K Street.

PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Laying the foundations for a better America

There is a need not only for more public investment, but also for an expansion of the concept of infrastructure.

By David Moberg

From policy wonks to corporate bigwigs, participants in President-elect Clinton's two-day confab on the economy reaffirmed the importance of public investment. Unfortunately—given the need both for repair of the existing crumbling infrastructure and for developing energy-efficient and environmentally sound foundations of the future—concern about the budget deficit looms as a dangerous damper to public initiative.

Ideally, the government would undertake new investments of at least \$60 billion a year, far beyond the \$20 billion Clinton has proposed. Yet even at that rate the U.S. would lag behind many of its competitors. The funds could come from military cuts, higher taxes, more debt (a rational move despite the current deficit, as many conference

participants argued) and private capital. The need is real, the likely payoff would be enormous and the money would be available, if there were the political will.

Yet at any level of spending, there will be tough choices: which investments are most needed and will provide the greatest social and economic return? A case can be made for repairing and upgrading traditional public infrastructure—paving streets, expanding sewers and water treatment plants, maintaining urban transit. Those projects are much needed and can quickly yield several hundred thousand jobs.

But Clinton needs to focus on the long term, providing patient capital for the economy's underpinnings and using the government to organize and build, where necessary, comprehensive systems in areas such as transportation, energy and communications. Better planning of infrastructure systems and the relationships among them can not only increase the efficiency of investment but also help realize broader social goals, such as reducing inequality or reviving urban centers. By making energy efficiency, environmental sustainability and social equity conscious

goals of a coherent infrastructure policy, Clinton can ultimately increase the economic return on public investment.

Public investment in the U.S. is more complicated than elsewhere because this country relies more heavily on private enterprise to provide essential infrastructure than do most others. However, in some cases, the government can organize and encourage private investment to serve much the same function as public investment through regulation, standard setting, loan guarantees, governmental purchases and the kind of public/private partnerships that Clinton extols.

Above all, whether the money is public or private, government needs to set some priorities and establish a strategic vision, coordinating policies so that they complement and reinforce each other. Consider the relationships among transportation, energy and communications policies.

Moving people and goods as we do has become too expensive, too bogged down in congestion, too environmentally harmful and frequently inadequate for social needs (linking small towns with cities, getting inner-city residents to suburban jobs). David Morris of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance in Washington argues that the country should redesign transportation not with piecemeal improvements oriented toward existing transportation modes but with the idea of serving the needs of people and business most efficiently, taking into account all the costs.

Both the automobile and aviation are subsidized and their full costs ignored. Besides dedicated trust fund taxes, air and auto travel receive huge direct and indirect taxpayer

subsidies. Worldwatch Institute estimates that each auto in the U.S. receives a subsidy of \$2,400 a year.

Meanwhile, far too little is being done to develop an appealing, efficient system of mass transit (including new ideas for more flexible public transit) or high-speed intercity trains. Such 150- to 200-mile-per-hour trains are deployed throughout France, Japan and Germany. Europe is undertaking a vast expansion of a continent-wide high speed train network. In the U.S., high-speed trains could displace a large part of air travel in the 100- to 600-mile range as well as much highway traffic with far greater energy efficiency (thus less environmental harm), lower cost, greater safety and virtually the same or better speed.

Even greater speed and efficiency would be possible with magnetic levitation, or maglev, transportation, a technology that uses powerful magnets to suspend cars above a guideway and propel them forward at more than 300 miles per hour. Yet only \$30 million out of \$155 billion authorized in 1991 for transportation infrastructure over six years was allocated for high-speed trains, and none of the \$725 million authorized for maglev research has yet been appropriated.

Congress this year failed to grant states unrestricted use of tax-exempt bonds to finance their own high-speed rail systems, even though such bonds support airports and highways. The measure was killed by Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, Clinton's treasury secretary-designate, under pressure from Southwest Airlines.

If the federal government offered seed capital and loan guarantees as well as tax-exempt bonds, many high-speed lines—already planned in Texas, California, Florida and other states—could be built with private and public investment. Trains could compete on a level playing field.

In addition to reducing costs, pollution, congestion, accidents and dependence on foreign oil, a railroad revival could generate new manufacturing jobs—except that there are no longer any U.S. companies making passenger trains. Contracts for new trains could specify domestic manufacturing, with the hope that government commitment to railroads and technical support could eventually produce new U.S. manufacturers.

Maglev, pioneered in the U.S., lost all federal support in 1975, but Germany and Japan have poured billions of dollars into developing and testing prototypes. Nevertheless, the U.S. still has a reasonable chance of competing for this new technology, which could also help commercialize high-temperature superconductivity.

But a rational transportation policy is not likely to emerge without a different energy policy. After his economic conference, Clinton hinted that he would support slightly higher fuel taxes if they were part of a progressive tax reform package. All energy tax revenue should go into a unified transportation fund, from which allocations would be made according to a comprehensive plan. Proportionately, much more money should go for rail, public transit and energy-efficient cars, such as hydrogen fuel-cell or electric

cars—either of which could ultimately rely on solar power. But the fund should also encourage improvements of old infrastructure, such as use of longer-lasting road materials.

Yet raising energy costs without taking steps to develop a new energy infrastructure would lead to unnecessary hardship on low-income people, a rocky transition away from fossil fuels and potentially heavier reliance on nuclear power. The cheapest, most effective improvements in the energy infrastructure don't involve traditional construction projects, such as dams or power plants, but rather improvements in energy efficiency.

Thus, the federal government should financially support research on efficiency technologies, from photovoltaics to hydrogen-powered vehicles, but even more important it should start using energy-efficiency technologies itself (and stipulate the same in all federal infrastructure aid to state and local governments). For example, environmentalist Barry Commoner has demonstrated that, even at current prices, the federal government could buy about \$86 million in photovoltaics and rechargeable batteries to replace the dry cell batteries it uses and save more than \$100 million a year. Such a large order, he found, would speed development of photovoltaics, probably cutting the price by one-third and tripling the market where photovoltaics would be competitive.

Many states already require their utilities to pursue "least cost" energy strategies, which usually entail investing in energy efficiency rather than new plants. Although private utilities initially resisted such requirements, several utility executives raved at Clinton's conference about their success selling efficiency. The federal government could pursue such policies—increasing the efficiency of its own operations—and also provide incentives for states that most aggressively implement least-cost strategies at all levels, such as giving them preference in other public investment.

With strong federal leadership, there would be a cascading effect of efficiency initiatives. For example, a group of major utilities from states whose regulators had required implementation of least-cost energy strategies is awarding \$30 million to the company that develops and manufactures the best high-efficiency refrigerator that does not use ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons.

With a little money and a lot of creative intervention, the federal government could help overcome the shortcomings in the market for energy efficiency. Useful mechanisms could include technical advisers for business on energy efficiency; low-interest loans for businesses, individuals and homeowners; grants to the poor for home efficiency improvements; and incentives for efficiency purchases such as bounties for turning in gas-guzzlers or "feebates" that penalize inefficient cars and reward the purchase of efficient cars.

Efficiency gains—whether in time, energy or money—effectively create new income, raising standards of living and stimulating the economy (usually with significant environmental benefits). Although not usually thought of as



Photos: Steve Kagen, Amtrak & Nissan USA; left: Mike DeCoster

“infrastructure” in the way highways or roads are, energy-efficiency investments deserve to be seen in much the same light.

The highways and train tracks of the information-age economy will be a network of fiber optic cables carrying vastly more complex messages than possible with today's telephone lines or cable television. The networks that now connect computer users give just a hint of the possibilities. This national information infrastructure could transform education, health care, financial transactions, entertainment and work—and substitute for much current travel. It would create an electronic marketplace or community on a grand scale, and in the process unleash new possibilities for information services as well as technological hardware, such as high-definition televisions and friendlier computers. With the creation of this national information infrastructure, the

consumer electronics market could be transformed, giving U.S. producers a chance to regain a foothold in an industry now dominated by the Japanese.

Al Gore has been an enthusiastic backer of such information infrastructure, and his 1991 legislation committed \$2 billion to develop a network among the nation's supercomputers. Already bits and pieces of the new infrastructure are emerging, but there is no consistency in the design of the systems, and obstacles to progress have been posed by competition among industries, such as the telephone and cable companies.

Our deregulated communications industry may be innovative in some ways, says Fred Weingarten, executive director of Washington's Computing Research Association, “but it's not very good at planning the next national infrastructure. These guys compete with each other, and sitting

back and expecting that they'll spontaneously get together and agree on where we should go is futile. The federal government somehow has to intervene softly."

As these examples suggest, there is a need not only for more public investment but also for an expansion of the concept of infrastructure. For example, federal support for basic research and for the commercialization of technologies as well as education and worker retraining should be seen as

essential economic building blocks on a par with transportation, energy and communications.

In many cases, direct public investment will be the most effective approach. In other cases, public spending can be used to leverage private investment. But the government, even then, must act to guarantee that the emerging infrastructure in all areas is inclusive and available to everyone. If the new information or energy efficiency infrastructure developments were left to private business alone, for example, the poor and perhaps the vast majority of Americans would not be able to take advantage of the new systems. That would not only exacerbate inequality but also undermine the full potential of new infrastructure.

In addition to encouraging efficiency and environmental sustainability, then, it is crucial that the federal government insure that new infrastructure developments create a greater sense of inclusive community and reduce inequality. With that vigilant strategy, the new wave of public investment can be an investment in a better society as well as a more productive economy. ◀

ROUGH CUTS

By JA Reid

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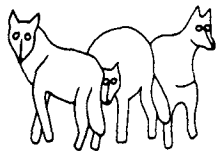
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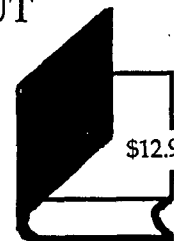
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B U S I N E S S

Tax dodgers

W

Corporate America should provide something in return for its many tax breaks.

By Thomas Karier

While death and taxes continue to stalk mere mortals, corporations often avoid both. The issue this time is the tax fraud perpetrated by foreign corporations operating in the United States. Bill Clinton promised to send the tax collectors after them. George Bush defended them as valuable foreign investors. At the root of this issue are Japanese corporations who allegedly understate profits and reduce their U.S. tax liability—by as much as \$15 billion a year, according to John Judis (see *In These Times*, Sept. 16).

Of course the IRS should move in on corporate malefactors and mop up. But while it may be politically expedient to focus on foreign companies, the fact is that most U.S. companies are also not paying their fair tax share. During the past 30 years, the share of the federal budget paid for by corporate taxes has fallen

from 23 percent to 8 percent.

What have we gotten for all these tax breaks? Layoffs, plant closures, corporate flight, fat executive salaries, mergers and acquisitions, permanent replacement workers, leveraged buyouts and a lot of minimum-wage jobs. Is it too much to ask that corporate America provide something in return for their accelerated depreciation, foreign tax credits, interest deductions and reduced tax rates? Only a complete overhaul of the U.S. tax code can provide incentives for companies to train workers, create high-wage jobs, invest in research and development, restore the environment, cut executive salaries and still generate needed tax revenue.

A new, revitalized tax net can do this and still catch the small foreign fish who swim through an old loophole called transfer pricing. This particular tax dodge has recently been rediscovered. But it is nothing new. At issue is the artificial nature of prices used to value goods transferred between parent corporations and their foreign subsidiaries. By

raising or lowering transfer prices, profits are shifted effortlessly between parent and subsidiary. When Ford-Mexico charges Ford-USA \$200 more for generators, profits rise \$200 in Mexico and fall \$200 in the U.S.

Although the IRS requires corporations to set prices as if the parent and subsidiary are two separate companies—what they call “arms length” pricing—tax collectors seldom challenge company accountants. The rule is blatantly violated by some companies and broadly exploited by many. The solution is for the IRS to define transfer prices precisely in order to put an end to creative accounting, domestic and foreign. But the amount of revenue this reform will generate has probably been overstated.

Japanese firms set lower profit margins than their American counterparts, so they will pay lower profit taxes. But closing the transfer-price loophole will also affect many U.S. companies. Approximately 15 percent of all U.S. imports and 24 percent of exports are simply transfers within U.S. companies.

What isn't clear is how closing the loophole will affect the taxes of U.S. companies since some are shifting profits back to the U.S. to avoid higher foreign taxes (developing countries have complained for years that U.S. multinational corporations have been bilking them), while others are shifting profits to tax havens abroad, such as free enterprise zones. Only by closing the loophole will we find out whether the IRS has been a net winner or loser from this shell game.

In any case, closing one loophole won't make much difference as long as corporations have a myriad of other ways to shirk their public obligation.

Thomas Karier is a professor of economics at Eastern Washington University.

NATIONALISM

Fear and loathing in Macedonia

Emil Georgiev runs an electronics store on Skopje's fashionable Marshall Tito Boulevard. It's the kind of shop one would expect to be a casualty of Macedonia's hard economic times. But Georgiev says business has been good, although the reason he offers hardly inspires hope.

"Any small incident could trigger a catastrophe," says one observer in this former Yugoslavian republic.

By Richard Caplan
SKOPJE, MACEDONIA

"Everyone is afraid of war," he explains, echoing sentiments one hears throughout the country. "So people who have money are spending it. They have no faith in the future."

Their fear is not unwarranted. A potent combination of internal unrest and external threats is conspiring to undermine the fragile peace in this former Yugoslavian republic. And unlike the conflicts the region has witnessed so far, an eruption of violence in Macedonia could very well plunge the entire southern Balkans into war. Consid-

ered until recently to be an island of relative calm, Macedonia now finds itself buffeted by ethnic tensions that threaten to polarize the population. These tensions exploded in November when as many as 3,000 ethnic Albanians clashed with the Macedonian police in Skopje following a crackdown on Albanian black marketeers.

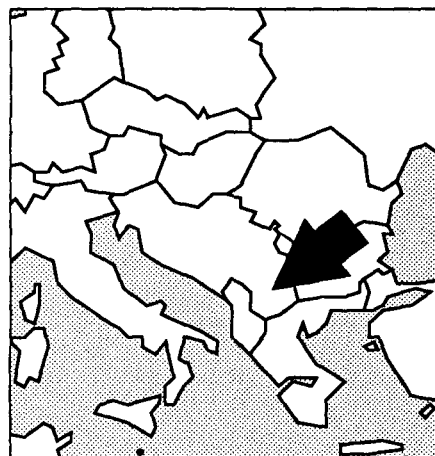
The riots came as a shock. Ethnic Albanians—the country's largest minority—are well represented in the government, where they hold four cabinet positions and nearly 20 percent of the seats in the legislative assembly. They also enjoy significantly more advantages (including their own schools and a share of the media) than many minorities elsewhere in Europe. Yet they have been frustrated in their efforts to overcome a legacy of discrimination and achieve full equality with Macedonian Slavs.

"Most of their demands are reasonable in the long term," says Steve Crvenkovski, one of Macedonia's four vice presidents. "But their expectations are too high. People think that now that we've got democracy every-

thing should be solved at once."

Even the faint sympathy Crvenkovski expresses for Albanian concerns is not widely shared. As a consequence, the Albanians have encountered stiff opposition to their political agenda. "Whenever there are Albanian initiatives in the Assembly, the Macedonian parties form a bloc against us," complains Muhamed Halili, a high-ranking Albanian legislator. He cites an unsuccessful attempt recently to reform the law requiring that names on identity cards, passports and all other official papers appear in Macedonian rather than in the language of one's choice.

Still, the differences between Albanians and Macedonians, many believe, are not unbridgeable, and for the moment both groups seem committed to working them out. The current climate, however, is hardly conducive to accommodation. The country is reeling from the effects of a triple economic crisis as a result of the U.N. sanctions against Serbia, ordinarily Macedonia's largest trading partner; a Greek embargo against Macedonia, whom Athens accuses of harboring expansionist aims; and the continued unwillingness



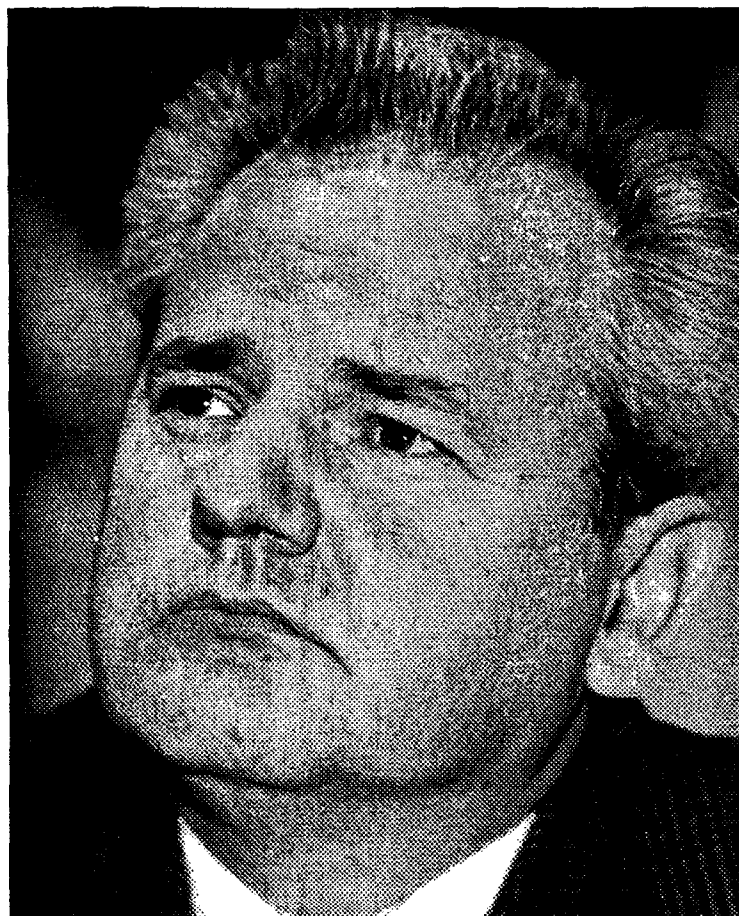
of most countries to recognize Macedonia (out of deference to Greece), making it off-limits to virtually all aid and investment.

The economic crisis, naturally, is aggravating ethnic tensions, generating pressures on all sides to embrace more extreme—that is, nationalist—positions. The moderate governing coalition, led by Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski, is especially vulnerable as long as international recognition of Macedonia remains elusive. Continued nonrecognition creates an opening for the stridently nationalist Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, currently the largest party in the Assembly.

Meanwhile, there is talk that the Albanians, angry and frustrated, may withdraw their support of the government. And though the Albanian political leadership has until now supported Macedonia's efforts to achieve recognition, Sami Ibrahimi, deputy president of the Party for Democratic Prosperity, recently called on European countries to postpone recognition until Albanians are accorded the status of a "constituent nation."

Yet it is precisely because the situation remains so fluid that recognition is key to stabilizing Macedonia and a precondition for a broader Balkan peace. Macedonia satisfied the European Community's (EC) requirements for recognition last January, but Greek objections to the use of the name "Macedonia" have prevented the EC, and the United States in tow, from moving forward. Greece, a member of NATO, worries that Macedonians have designs on its northern territory by the same name, despite the fact that Macedonia has forsworn any territorial pretensions and even amended its constitution accordingly. Indeed, if there are any grounds for concern, they go the other way. At one time or another nearly every country in the region has laid claim to Macedonia. Bulgaria occupied it briefly after the Russo-Turkish War in 1878; Greece acquired part of it after the Second Balkan War in 1913; and within the short-lived Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918-44), Macedonia was known as southern Serbia.

The mixed signals coming from Macedonia's neighbors today are a legacy of this tangled history. Bulgaria has rec-



Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's ethnic policies indirectly threaten Macedonia's security.

ognized the state of Macedonia but not the nation. Vojislav Seselj, leader of Serbia's ultra-nationalist Radical Party, has called for the partition of Macedonia. And Greece has spent tens of thousands of dollars on a glossy advertising campaign that, in essence, denies the existence of non-Greek Macedonians. Continued unrest in this political no-man's land, many believe, offers a ready pretext for intervention. "Any small incident could trigger a catastrophe," says Vladimir Milcin, a playwright and political activist. Similarly, Sami Ibrahimi has warned that if there are more violent conflicts within the country, "Macedonia will disappear and become a piece of cake for the neighboring countries.... The third world war could start right here." If war does erupt in the southern Balkans, however, the spark may very well come not from Macedonia but from the Serbian province of Kosovo to its north—home to some 2 million Albanians. Tensions have mounted in the past year with Serbia's closing of the university and disbanding of the parliament. Any attempts to "cleanse" Kosovo, as Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic has threatened to do, would very likely bring Albanians from neighboring Albania and Macedonia to Kosovo's defense.

The hands of the clock on Skopje's old railroad station are frozen at 5:17, marking the precise moment a devastating earthquake struck the city in 1963. Time, however, does not stand still for Macedonia, as this fledgling country edges closer to war. But it is a war that may be avoided. The recent decision by the U.N. Security Council to deploy peacekeeping troops along Macedonia's borders is a step in the right direction. Recognition on the part of the international community and good will on the part of all Macedonians is required to complete the equation. ◀

Richard Caplan is a New York-based journalist with the Institute for War & Peace Reporting in London.

ECONOMY

Taking on the tax burden

It is, perhaps, an accident of fate that one of the biggest stories of the '80s was the one most likely to put everyone to sleep.

The \$80 billion in tax cuts for the richest 1 percent "can explain the entire increase in the size of the federal budget deficit" since 1977.

By Zack Nauth

In what a decade after the fact has become widely accepted, tax cuts in 1977 and 1981 helped orchestrate a massive shift in income from the poor and middle class to the rich. The richest 1 percent of families in the U.S. have seen their after-tax income jump 136 percent in 15 years, according to the Washington, D.C.-based Citizens for Tax Justice (CTJ). Similarly, the share of corporate tax collections has declined, now totaling only 40 percent annually of what they averaged in the '70s, resulting in a \$130 billion annual revenue loss.

A recent CTJ study demonstrated that \$80 billion in tax cuts for the richest 1 percent "can explain the entire increase in the

size of the federal budget deficit" since 1977. In turn, the growth of the deficit succeeded in ending our nation's debate about what would make a "Great Society" and instead focused it on what could be cut to leave the "Pretty Good Society." Education spending dropped 40 percent and the typical family lost \$1,260 a year in benefits from all government spending.

It is now clear that the Treasury was mugged while the family snoozed. The perpetrators, however, did not accomplish their heist merely by sending their hirelings to Washington to cash in. As Hedrick Smith described in his 1987 book, *The Power Game*,

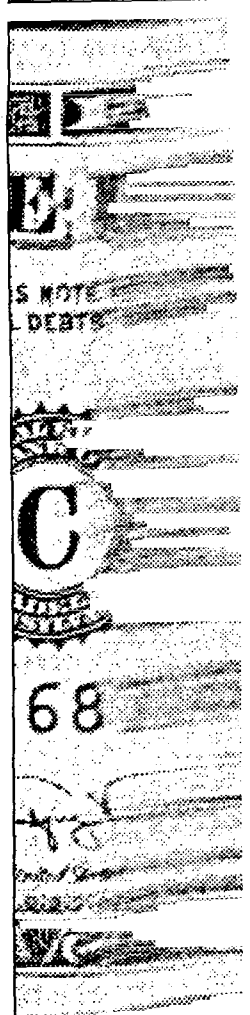
the Reagan tax cuts of 1981 passed because the right activated a carefully built grass-roots network of businesses, large and small, and conservative faithful, who flooded Congress with urgent demands to implement the president's fiscal policies.

Now fair tax advocates are trying to do the same thing. The State Tax Activists Network held its first conference in December. The conference was an offshoot of a gathering called last year by AFSCME, in which more than 30 tax activists from 20 states began discussing a closer working relationship.

At the December conference, participants began hammering out ways in which groups could coordinate campaigns in several states, much like business lobbying groups such as the Chemical Manufacturers Association have done on "tort reform" and other issues.

The groups discussed focusing on an issue such as corporate income tax disclosure, one that the Tax Equity Alliance of Massachusetts (TEAM) supported and won in 1992. Several other groups had led corporate disclosure campaigns, making it easier for TEAM to justify its initiative. Fair tax advocates say they hope TEAM's victory will make it easier for other state tax groups to pass similar measures.

A few state groups are flush with recent success, like the Taxpayers Alliance to Serve Connecticut, which won an income tax several years ago with the help of Gov. Lowell Weicker. Several others are battling to implement their first income tax, like the South Dakota Farmer's Union and Washington Citizen Action. The California Tax Reform





Association and the Louisiana Coalition for Tax Justice are fighting corporate tax breaks. Many, like the Tennesseans for Fair Taxation and Ocean State Action, are simply trying to raise sufficient revenues to avoid further devastating budget cuts.

The renewed hope with the election of Democrat Bill Clinton had already been dimmed a bit in December with the appointment of loophole and business advocates such as Lloyd Bentsen at Treasury. But rather than waiting to see what happens, tax activists—led by the CTJ—are sounding the alarm, and for the first time seriously taking steps to build if not a grass-roots movement for fair taxes and public services, then at least an effective network of tax activists who themselves are trying to build a grass-roots base.

During the '80s, CTJ formulated the most aggressive response to the tax cutters, and is the best-prepared group to lead the movement today. Formed in 1979, CTJ is a coalition of labor unions and social service organizations that share a common interest in a well-financed federal budget and progressive taxation. CTJ's brightest moment was its 1986 campaign to close the loopholes for Fortune 500 corporations, including General Electric, which paid no fed-

eral taxes that year. CTJ's campaign led to a major federal tax reform bill that put most corporations back on tax rolls.

Now, the CTJ is hoping a network of tax activists will help keep Washington on the right track. CTJ Director Bob McIntyre says that President-elect Clinton will need \$70 billion in new taxes to reduce the deficit and make the "investments" he called for in his campaign. Some of that will have to come from big business as well as the rich, as Clinton promised during the campaign. The president-elect's biggest challenge, McIntyre says, will be to resist the intense pressure for new business tax breaks, such as the investment tax credits.

"We need your help," McIntyre told the state tax activists. "We're counting on the grass-roots network to keep the heat on Clinton." That, in turn, will lead to opportunities for reform at the state level, he said. "Everything in state tax reform hinges on what happens in Washington."

What McIntyre didn't say was that the final outcome in Washington hinges on how good a job the state activists do in building their own base of grass-roots citizen support for more progressive tax and budget policies.

Zack Nauth is director of the Louisiana Coalition for Tax Justice.

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BLACK AMERICA

1992's historic counter-trends

Despite notable political successes, black Americans continue to lag far behind whites in education, health and economic status.

By Salim Muwakkil

T

he year 1992 was one of contrasting milestones for African-Americans.

On April 29, Los Angeles exploded into the century's deadliest urban disorder following the acquittal of the four white police officers charged with—and videotaped—beating black motorist Rodney King. The rage and destruction unleashed by the cops' acquittal spread across the country and briefly refocused the nation's attention on the crises of America's inner-cities.

Not surprisingly, this renewed attention revealed an underlying reality of seething racial tensions. It also illuminated growing friction between the various minority populations that coexist in urban America. In New York City, for

example, relations between Jewish-Americans and African-Americans have deteriorated so precipitously this year that Mayor David Dinkins has had to personally intervene.

After the November elections, however, African-Americans were basking in electoral successes that increased their congressional numbers by a historic 50 percent. With this new political strength, black members of Congress should wield much more influence in shaping the country's legislative agenda. What's more, increases in the congressional ranks of Latinos—from 10 to 19—offer an opportunity to develop an effective black/brown coalition.

Black women also had much to celebrate as 1992 came to a close. The February rape conviction of heavyweight boxer Mike Tyson, though controversial, was widely interpreted as a victory for black women. It was both an expression of outrage at the crime of rape and a continuation of the spirit sparked by Anita Hill's sexual harassment charge against Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

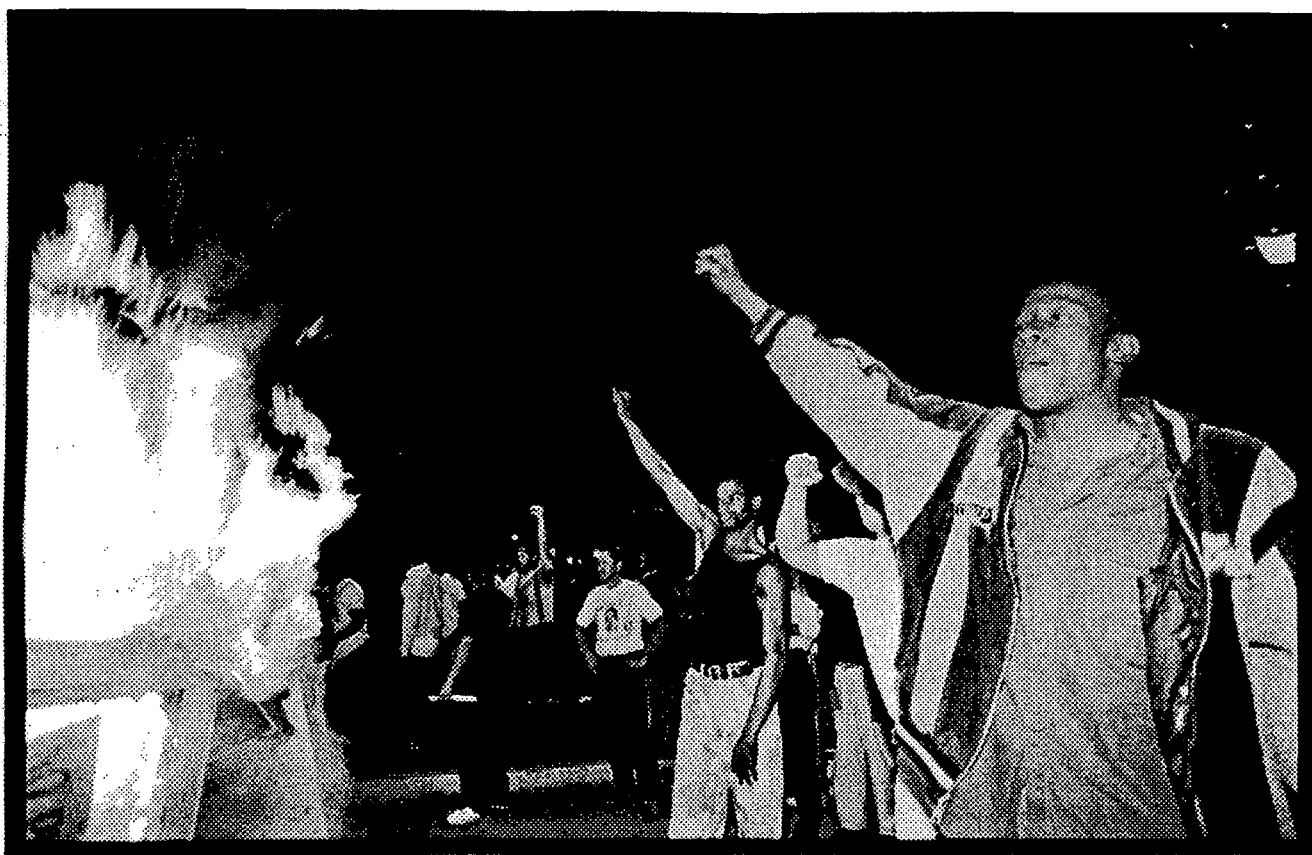
Illinois Democrat Carol Moseley Braun's successful campaign to become the U.S. Senate's first black woman was also sparked by the Hill-Thomas controversy. And black women more than doubled their numbers in the U.S. House, from four to nine. In a contest that garnered little media coverage, Pam Carter was elected attorney general of Indiana, becoming the first black woman in history to win a statewide office.

But Gary, Ind., the second largest city in Attorney General Carter's state, was closing in on a record murder rate late last year; most of the victims, as well as the victimizers, were black. Unfortunately, chalking up homicide rates was another characteristic of inner-city America in 1992. But another trend has emerged in the wake of the L.A. conflagration: street gangs across the country are mobilizing to reduce the violence in their neighborhoods by calling for "truces" among gang members.

Meanwhile, African-Americans continued making gains in the realm of popular culture. Hip-hop, or rap, music—a genre born in New York City's black neighborhoods—has not only jumped firmly into the U.S. mainstream, but it also has gained international acclaim and become a potent economic force for enterprising African-Americans.

Major movie studios were more hospitable to black filmmakers in 1992, continuing a trend established the previous year when a record number of 19 black films were released to moderate commercial success. Mainstream (read: white) audiences are demonstrating more interest in the subject matter of films crafted from a black perspective.

Names of black filmmakers like Reginald and Warring-



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ton Hudlin, John Singleton, Matty Rich, Robert Townsend, James Bond III, William Greaves and Charles Burnett are becoming well known among cinephiles who previously knew very few. Spike Lee's much hyped and generally well executed film *Malcolm X*, for example, has performed well at the box office and served as a lightning rod for much analysis and debate over the true significance of the charismatic martyr the film depicts.

But while these historic counter-trends may fuel the arguments of both pessimists and optimists, African-Americans' worsening statistical profile provides the most convincing data. For despite notable political successes, black Americans continue to lag far behind whites in education, health and economic status; in some categories, the gap has widened in recent years. Moreover, blacks are far overrepresented in the numbers detailing morbidity, mortality and incarceration.

Civil rights organizations remain the major line of attack against these disproportionate degradations, but in the face of their manifest inadequacies these groups are altering their tactics. Benjamin Hooks, executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), announced in February his resignation from the nation's oldest civil rights group. Hooks resigned after facing heated accusations that he failed to adapt the NAACP to the new social environment of post-civil rights America. The new leadership reportedly plans to sharpen the group's focus on black economic development.

Similarly, Chicago's Operation PUSH (People United to

Serve Humanity) recently announced it too will shift its emphasis from the political activity it specialized in under the leadership of founder and former president Jesse Jackson, to economic development. "In the last 12 years, we have made tremendous political gains but very few economic gains," said PUSH Executive Director Janette Wilson at a "black economic summit" held in Chicago in November. "Without an economic plan, however, political gains won't help us."

But politics continued to command considerable attention. Jesse Jackson decided to forego presidential politics and concentrate instead on more modest political goals—statehood for Washington, D.C., and a Senate seat from the 51st state for himself. This decision released many African-American politicians from a kind of racial obligation to support Jackson, and several of them surprisingly chose to support the candidacy of Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton.

When Clinton embarrassed Jackson by chiding outspoken rap performer Sister Souljah at a June gathering of the Rainbow Coalition, many political analysts charged the Arkansas governor with utilizing "Willie Horton" tactics to gain the support of whites. Despite those charges, African-American support figured heavily in Clinton's November victory. If the president-elect fulfills his campaign promises to the black community, the year 1993 may offer much more hope for the optimists.

The Los Angeles riots refocused the nation's attention on the cities—briefly.

DIALOGUE

THE SERBS ARE GUILTY AS CHARGED

By Paul Hockenos

As much as I appreciate Robert Schaeffer's (*ITT*, Nov. 30) and Jasminka Udovicki's (*ITT*, Dec. 14) responses to my appeal for full-scale military intervention in the Balkans (*ITT*, Oct. 28), I strongly disagree with both pieces.

The first and most dangerous misconception that both authors endorse is that somehow "all sides" are responsible for the terror that has engulfed former Yugoslavia. True enough, there are no angels in Balkan wars. But the overwhelming onus of responsibility for the killings (more than 150,000 dead in Bosnia), the expulsions and the destruction lies incontrovertibly on the side of the Bosnian Serbs and their sponsors in Serbia proper.

Udovicki claims that "though less numerous," the atrocities committed against Bosnian Serbs are "no different" from those that Serb irregulars have carried out against the Moslems. Well, I'm sorry, but there are differences, great differences. First, it is the Serbs who have been the aggressors and initiators of expansionist territorial wars against Croatia in 1991 and now against Bosnia-Herzegovina. In both cases, the Croats and the Bosnian Moslems (along with Bosnian Croats) have fought defensive wars with rag-tag armies against immensely superior, well-armed Serb forces backed by the Serbian-Yugoslav army. Second, it is only the Serbs that have implemented the fascistic modus operandi of concentration camps, torture, mass rapings and "ethnic cleansing" to achieve their objective, namely a Greater Serbia. Not a single independent human rights report that I have come across charges either the Bosnian Muslims or the Croats with such methods. Certainly, the Croat and Moslem forces have also committed atrocities. But the Serb numbers so dwarf those of their opponents that their sheer quantity, per Hegel, clearly distinguishes a new and wholly different quality.

Schaeffer also mistakenly throws all of the former Yugoslav peoples and successor states into the same pot, arguing against intervention on behalf of "irresponsible states" and "illegitimate governments." In reference to Bosnia-Herzegovina, I simply can't begin to fathom what he's talking about. Bosnia-Herzegovina is an internationally recognized sovereign state with a freely elected government, which, until the outbreak of the war, had no record of human rights violations or the "massive dislocation of ethnic groups," as Schaeffer implies. That is Serb policy and Serb policy alone.

Schaeffer goes on to argue for the mass evacuation of people from Bosnian war zones, presumably those few that the Serbs haven't yet occupied. How he envisions evacuating the hun-

dreds of thousands of people from Sarajevo alone I can't imagine. Even now Europe is shutting its doors to the exodus of war refugees. And what then? Leave Bosnia free for Serb forces to massacre the remnants of the Bosnian army and impose control over all of Bosnia? The idea is absurd.

The election of Milosevic on December 20 indicates that there will be no about-face in Serb policy. The conquered territories in Bosnia and Croatia will remain Serbian and the war criminals will go unpunished.

I also reject the many arguments that effective military intervention in Bosnia is simply impossible, because of geography, supply routes, Serb determination, or whatever. I used the analogy of Desert

Storm, not because I support or supported the aims of that war but because it was decisive, effective and, according to its goal—the liberation of Kuwait's oil fields—successful. If it wanted to, the West could intervene just as potently in the Balkans.

As someone who has consistently opposed U.S. military intervention abroad since the '60s, my decision to argue for intervention in the former Yugoslavia was a difficult and painful one. My one regret, however, is not having advocated it sooner.

Those who argue that military intervention in Bosnia is impossible are wrong.

IN THE ARTS

What happened to Hoffa?

W

The once-promising film winds up at the bottom of a murky pond, wearing cement shoes.

By Pat Dowell

Whatever you're expecting from *Hoffa*—a great Jack Nicholson performance, a red-meat saga of racketeering, a glimpse into the formation of America's biggest and baddest union, or an inside look at the working-class icon—you're in for a letdown. In fact, I found it to be the biggest film disappointment of 1992.

Hoffa is a mess, even with an ideally cast Nicholson on screen for virtually every minute of two and a half hours. He is probably the only actor who could or should undertake the arduous task of playing James Riddle Hoffa, whom conventional wisdom (or the dominant ideology) has pegged as labor's most revealing anti-hero, the guy who definitively demonstrates that working stiff's can't be trusted with too much power (unlike, say, captains of industry).

You won't learn any more than that about the

Teamsters leader from Nicholson's performance. He plays Hoffa from the early '30s, when he doggedly organized truckers one-on-one by hitching midnight rides with them, through his disappearance and presumed death in 1975 at the age of 62.

Nicholson huffs and puffs under what looks like a very uncomfortable and immobilizing facial prosthesis. This is not Nicholson's best work, to say the least. But the culprit here is not so much Nicholson or even director Danny DeVito, who exhibits a sense of style if not judgment, but the much-adored playwright and screenwriter David Mamet, whose *Glengarry Glen Ross* is a likely Oscar nominee this year. Mamet also penned *The Untouchables* as a hard-line Republican take on law and order—the Ed Meese version of Elliott Ness, it seemed at the time—for director Brian De Palma in 1987.

Mamet's script for *Hoffa* is similarly blunt and overly impressed with macho swagger (women play a tiny, virtually silent role in the story). More irritating, however, is Mamet's

laughable vagueness. He reduces an outrageous cast of real-life characters and events to a handful of mere composites.

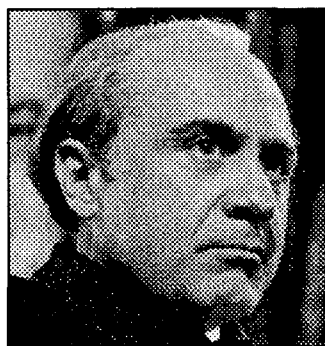
Danny DeVito plays all of Hoffa's pals rolled into one fiercely loyal puppy, who is there even at the end (and shares Hoffa's fate). Armand Assante stands in for several organized crime associates, a generic Italian gangster. He and his shadowy mob are drawn not from life but from movie conventions, and obsolete ones at that. He plays with *Godfather*-style formality and courtliness rather than the grubby entrepreneurship of *Goodfellas*.

Organized crime, Mamet would have it, tapped Hoffa on the shoulder during an early huge and violent strike (the movie's generic strike—date, place, and employer typically fuzzy). Beefy guys in shiny suits are concerned about their

own illicit profits; Hoffa makes a deal for mob muscle in exchange for a diversion of Teamster trucks to gang warehouses.

Hoffa's biographers suggest otherwise, by the way. It seems Hoffa actually called on local crime bosses (who had a history of providing reinforcements to all sides in labor disputes) for help in routing not a trucking company, but a rival CIO union.

Whatever real gains Hoffa made for over-the-road truckers by making the



Hoffa

Directed by
Danny DeVito.



Photos by François Duhamel

class hero. And in the speculative scenario for Hoffa's death, Mamet uses heavy-handed irony, delivering the victim to his own vanity and fame.

All that's missing is an overhead shot (DeVito's favorite point of view) of the Meadowlands sports complex in New Jersey, where, it has long been rumored, Jimmy Hoffa is planted in the end zone. It's also said that Hoffa's remains were crushed and incorporated into the products of a bumper manufacturer. More likely he rests in a 55-gallon oil drum in a New Jersey dump.

"Never let a stranger in your cab, your house, or your heart unless he is a friend of labor," Nicholson as Hoffa tells his pal early on. Whether Hoffa was a friend of labor is still a matter of debate, unenlightened by this movie, whose only contribution can be heard in television ads, wherein a narrator

Teamsters into America's most powerful trade union, you won't find it here. Mamet's script is fixated on Hoffa's downfall, particularly his battles with Robert Kennedy (played as an Ivy League snot by Kevin Anderson) and his death. Hoffa's 1964 convictions for jury-tampering and pension-fund fraud and his subsequent journey to prison are presented with the kind of agonized awe usually reserved for Good Friday telecasts of the Stations of the Cross.

The movie applies more imagination to Hoffa's death than to most of the major incidents in his life and work, which are relegated within the film to memories and flashbacks as Hoffa and companion Bobby (DeVito) wait in a suburban Detroit parking lot that July day, Hoffa's last, in 1975.

Released from prison on a deal that barred his re-entry into Teamster politics, Hoffa was still trying to regain union control. His scheduled meeting was with former mob allies trying to change his mind. No doubt Mamet considered the parking-lot framing of the story a more dramatic structure than a linear biography, but it subjugates the significance of Hoffa's life to the circumstances of its ending.

The restaurant where Hoffa waits in his car has been changed from the swanky Red Fox to a proletarian diner, an image more befitting an intellectual's idea of a working-

intones, "He did what he had to do." Whether Hoffa "had to" make a pact with organized crime is the still-unanswered question, isn't it?

Both DeVito and Mamet are avowed "friends" of Hoffa—that is, they grew to admire him—but with friends like these who needs enemies? And they're no friends of labor, whatever their avowals. They've framed Hoffa as the latest Hollywood cliché, as another American dreamer gone astray—like Bugsy Siegel or Christopher Columbus—and they've depicted his rise and fall without a context to give it meaning.

James Riddle Hoffa is America's favorite idea of a labor leader, one corrupted by power. His story is America's favorite union story; even Sylvester Stallone tried a fictionalized version of it in *F.I.S.T.* (1978). Like *F.I.S.T.*, and most Hollywood films dealing with labor unions, *Hoffa* suppresses its real subject. Hollywood's Great Man theory of history is ill-equipped to deal with the idea of collective action, of an organized movement. The American film industry knows nothing but the star system, and it looks only to the force of individual personality to explain how society works and changes. That's the fundamental reason why *Hoffa* the movie doesn't make sense of Hoffa the man. ◀

P O P M U S I C

The new mediocrity

The past year was dominated by songs that only sounded meaningful, sincere and passionate.

By Ted Cox

S

ometime in 1992, after Boyz II Men's "End of the Road" had been the No. 1 song in the country for about two months straight, I came to the sudden realization that I couldn't think of how the song went. I couldn't even recall hearing it on the radio. For someone who takes pride in staying abreast of popular music—long after he should have gone on to more serious pursuits, some would no doubt say—this was a painful discovery. Yet, the very next time I got in my car, the song was introduced, and there it was. Why, I must have heard it 25 times before, and I would hear it—or bits of it, while changing from channel to channel, both on radio and television—countless times again.

"End of the Road" was No. 1 for 13 straight weeks, setting a record for what *Billboard* magazine calls "the rock era." Nobody—

not Michael Jackson, not the Bee Gees, not the Rolling Stones, not the Beatles, not the Supremes, not Elvis Presley, not even Ray Price or Rick Dees, fer crissake—had had a song that so dominated the pop charts, not since the prehistoric '40s. Yet the song was capable of going in one ear and out the other without making an impression—time after time after time.

No matter what one thinks about the current course of popular music, "End of the Road" is a hard song not to like. It is a super-sincere, if formulaic, soul ballad, complete with a humble excuse for a melody, a spoken bridge and an a cappella ending. It is embellished by Boyz II Men's modern-day doowop, by singing in which one can hear the emotion (if one listens for it), and it is distinguished, if it is distinguished at all, by the producers' care in the arrangement. Yet, for me, the song came to represent something else. It was the "End of the Road" all right; it was pop-culture death. Nineteen ninety-two was marked by the rise of the new medioc-

rity, manifested foremost by Boyz II Men, Michael Bolton, Harry Connick Jr., any of several country artists, and, yes, the Black Crowes. The sad truth is that the days when we could discern the sincere and the ingenuous by separating the druggies from the straights are over.

Herbert Marcuse is a writer whose work I respect, and I think of him often when I write about pop music because he held such a poor opinion of something I find essential in my life. Yet I don't think even he would suggest that these artists set out, like pop Pied Pipers, to lure the society at large into unthinking somnolence, or that record companies have chosen to sign and promote these artists for just such a cause. No, that's not the method of the mass media anymore in their role of maintaining the status quo. Time Warner is proof that a Madonna, an Ice-T or an Oliver Stone is much more to the liking of today's media conglomerates: they have the prestige of real artists about them, and they keep people distracted from what's really important by giving them the impression that the issues they raise are importance itself. A Bolton, by contrast, is just an unpretentious working stiff pouring his guts out for fame and fortune—the demons that drove Elvis, after all—who happens to have finally hit on that fleeting connection to a mass audience. Whatever one says about Bolton, one can't deny that he does sing with passion. It's the one-note, unmodulated passion of the philistine, but it's passion just the same—which is what makes the new mediocrity so problematic.

The popular music of the '90s sounds all right on a basic level. It's embellished with the touches that we've taught ourselves to recognize as emotion, sincerity, meaning—but what it means, in the end, is elusive. Marcuse's argument that pop culture is largely a distraction still applies; it's just

that media conglomerates have found more authentic-sounding distractions. They did so because they had to, because a more sophisticated audience demanded them.

Given a choice between taking Bolton's "[Sitting on] The Dock of the Bay" or Billy Joel's "The Stranger" to that proverbial desert island, I'm not afraid to say I'd take Bolton: at least there's an attempt to communicate something basic from artist to listener, not just an attempt by the artist to prove what an artist he is. The '90s are superior to the '70s in that respect. On the other hand, back home in reality, neither Bolton nor Joel is going to move me to get off my butt and actually do something—other than get up and turn the channel, that is.

In this regard, 1992 was a bad year in pop, but it was a worse year for women in particular. The Thomas-Hill backlash—so pervasive in politics—failed to materialize in music, aside from Kim Gordon's guttural vocals on Sonic Youth's *Dirty*. Suzanne Vega, Melissa Etheridge, the Indigo Girls—all offered variations on the old singer/songwriter pose. (Their male counterparts—James McMurtry, Michael Penn and old man Neil Young—fared only slightly better.) And, as for rap's leading women, Monie Love and Queen Latifah, they were between albums, busy working on a sitcom. Maybe there was something to the corrupting ways of old man mass media after all.

Sister Souljah? Put Michael Bolton back on.

Rap, pop's great avant-garde hope, stagnated and suffered through its worst year since the mid-'80s. The reasons were many. Top groups like Public Enemy and the Jungle Brothers were either between albums or released filler, ceding the season to hard-core gangstas like Ice Cube, whose rapping is more complex rhythmically than it is intellectually but who insists it's vice versa.

Hip hop, I believe, was hurt more by '70s pop star Gilbert O'Sullivan's low-profile legal victory over Biz Markie (who had sampled some of O'Sullivan's music without permission) than it was by threats—real or imagined—of censorship. Rap is at its best when threatened with censorship; the old sentiments are couched in new terms that are decoded from listener to listener, enriching the language and the culture. Yet the new—and foggy—restrictions on sampling were far more chilling as far as the actual process of making hip hop was concerned. Many rappers, Ice-T and the Beastie Boys among them, turned to old-fashioned instruments for at least the short term.

Ice-T was caught in a bind that was largely of his own making. Although he claims to be "The Original Gangsta," as an artist he functions best not as a realist but as a satirist. It's his sense of humor that keeps his albums afloat, and that

includes "Cop Killer" from the *Body Count* album. The album includes several songs that are laugh-out-loud funny, among them "KKK Bitch," "Voodoo," "There Goes the Neighborhood" and "Cop Killer." What else is one to make of a song in which the gruesome title is repeated over and over to comic effect, as in a Ramones tune? Yet the mass media were too distant or too threatened to recognize the satire, and when pushed by police groups and Republican politicians, what was Ice-T to say? If he fell back and said he was an artist, that it was all a joke—even an incisive and deeply satirical one—he'd lose street credibility, which is what sells rap albums most of all. (Just ask Ice Cube, on the one hand, and Kool Moe Dee, on the other.)

Drawing samples from Sly and the Family Stone and Buddy Guy and Junior Wells, Arrested Development emerged as the year's top new rap group. The hit single "Tennessee" was a genuine trend setter.

The music I found to like in 1992 dealt intelligently with basic issues. Just as there was a new substantiveness in politics, there seemed to be a new substantiveness in music to counter the new mediocrity. As music is closer to poetry than it is to op-ed columns, the basic issue wasn't health care or the economy but something more abstract—death, to be exact. Even Marcuse would have to be encouraged by that, I believe.

From Tom Waits' aptly named *Bone Machine* to the death songs at the heart of Lucinda Williams' *Sweet Old World*, from the distinctly unmusical *Magic and Loss* of Lou Reed to the gloomy yet vital music of R.E.M.'s *Automatic for the People*, death was in this year. And it wasn't the cartoon death of Megadeth or Black Sabbath, nor was it the romantic contemplation of death à la Nick Cave or Robert Smith. It was death, plain and simple, and what that, in turn, made of life: the fewer answers offered the better. For Waits, the music itself—and his bone-shaking percussion—seemed to have meaning; for Reed, it seemed in large part to be that he was still around to record an album at all. For Williams and R.E.M., there was something undeniably invigorating in their inability to record dreary albums even when they tried.

Last year's most unconventional rap group produced this year's prettiest single. P.M. Dawn came out with a song with a fragile, fetching melody, a seductive, understated bass line and—nobody was prepared for this—a piano solo. It was the song of the year, the sound of right now and for all time.

The Title? "I'd Die Without You," of course. ◀

Ted Cox is a journalist at the *Southtown Economist*.



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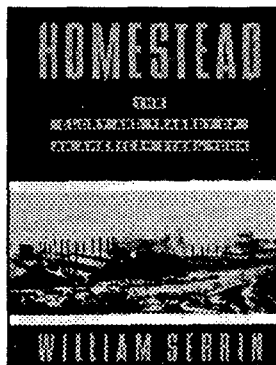
Lucinda Williams,
one of 1992's few
bright lights.

IN PRINT

The death of a steel town

By David Moberg

At its peak, Homestead, Pennsylvania's sprawling steel mill on the banks of the Monongahela River produced more than 10 million tons of iron and steel for the nation's dams, bridges, skyscrapers, highways, ships and factories. Once a thriving city of 20,000 with a lively business district, Homestead is now a bleak, dying shell of abandoned buildings, inhabited by an aging, increasingly impoverished population of only 4,000.



Homestead: The Glory and Tragedy of an American Steel Town
By William Serrin
Times Books,
452 pp., \$25

are able to lead elsewhere?"

Is the country's new labor czar right when he asserts that there is no "tragedy" in Homestead's decline? *Should* we care about Homestead?

Serrin, a distinguished and insightful labor journalist who formerly worked for the *New York Times*, clearly thinks so. He covered the death throes of Homestead's U.S. Steel plant, then returned for five years of research. He cares as much for the people of Homestead as for their community, because—contrary to Reich's assertion—those people are inseparable from the town's history and social life. But he

also recognizes that the callous abandonment of such a community is symptomatic of deeper social ills. His touching, sensitive, smoothly told tale provides a parable for America as well as a deeply engaging history of a town, an industry, a mill and its workers.

In many ways Homestead symbolized the rise of corporate, industrial America. The mill was opened in 1881 by a group of Pittsburgh-area businessmen and steel makers. It was sold a few years later to Andrew Carnegie, whose empire became the basis of U.S. Steel, a prototypical turn-of-the-century business trust that controlled 65 percent of the industry. The defeat of strikers in the violent battles with Pinkerton detectives in 1892 was also epochal, helping to give American industry a non-union stamp for decades to come. (University of Pittsburgh Press recently published historian Paul Krause's monumental, fascinating history of the 1892 strike, *The Battle for Homestead*, and a companion documentary volume edited by David Demarest, *The River Ran Red*.)

But by 1986 U.S. Steel had plummeted in power and importance. Most of its assets were in oil, and Disney displaced it from the Dow Jones stock index. Finally, the corporation shut down the Homestead Works. The mill had always dominated the town's economy, provided its payroll, and given its citizens pride in their hard work. When the steelworks died, Homestead died. Reich sees nothing to lament in all this, but I see at least five tragic themes in Serrin's book.

First, there is no provision in law for the property interest that workers and communities develop in business enterprises, especially ones as large and overweening as a Homestead mill. Workers asserted that interest from the time of the Homestead strike until the wave of steel shutdowns in the '80s: if they had had rights that reflected both their labors and public support of the industry, the Homestead story would have been less brutal, perhaps much different.

Instead, the history of Homestead—like most American business—is a tale of denigration of workers' rights and voices. That tragedy is often shrouded in a fog of deception—from Carnegie's hollow claims of concern for the workingman (which his partner Henry Clay Frick did not even bother to express) to the high wages paid in the last years of the mill, in part to quiet the workers.

Closely related to this theme is the tragic denial of substantive democracy in people's lives. After Frick and Carnegie smashed the union, Serrin recounts, they decided that they also had to break the town. They used spies and threats, bribes and gifts, but they made the town wholly dependent on the mill. This paternalism corrupted local political life and helped create a passive, debased working-class culture. For example, in Homestead's heyday, Serrin reports, everyone from workers to managers ripped off the mill for petty supplies—and their actions were indulged, much as plantation masters expected theft by field and household hands. When a union finally came, after decades of company suppression of workers' organization, it was a

hierarchical, centralized union established in a top-down deal with management. Homestead workers, like most American workers, had a circumscribed experience of democracy, even in their union.

As the plant was closing, a variety of protests sprouted: Homestead local union president Ronnie Weisen vituperatively denounced company and union; a few radical local ministers staged dramatic (and ultimately counterproductive) confrontations with upper-class Pittsburgh; and com-

munity organizers tried to implement a strategy of community ownership. Serrin details the strengths and weaknesses of each tactic as protesters struggled and ultimately failed. Yet, he notes, fewer workers participated in any of these protests than in the bitter meetings over pensions and retraining as the mill closed. The longstanding denial of democracy continued to take its toll.

There is a third tragic flaw built into the corporation and much of American business. While Carnegie was a shrewd businessman and a brilliant empire-builder, he depended on the technique and technology of other entrepreneurs and engineers. Yet compared to the men who followed—including financier J. Pierpont Morgan, who bought Carnegie Steel to merge into U.S. Steel—Carnegie was a creative businessman. Over the course of time, however, finance increasingly dominated the real work of the corporation, much as it has with many other American businesses.

"Carnegie had said, 'Pioneering don't pay,' but he did not practice this," Serrin writes. His successor as head of U.S. Steel, Judge Elbert Gary, "did not say this, but ... practiced it." The company took few risks, innovated little, relied on its market power, and had a myopic, blindered view of the world. As a result, it was vulnerable to competition from all fronts—other materials, foreign corporations, new domestic steel technologies.

Sadly, the same short-term ethic has dominated government for the past 12 years. If the government had been investing in public infrastructure at the rate it did in the '50s, there's a good chance Homestead would be viable today, since such spending would create a high demand for the plant's products.



LABAN

These other tragic flaws are related to a fourth one that Serrin identifies—the use-it-up, throw-it-out mentality that is a byproduct of America's easy growth through exploitation of rich natural resources and expansion of the frontier. Always in a hurry, concerned with the quick buck, unbureaucratic by precapitalist traditions of craftsmanship, American business triumphed with cheap mass production. If there was a problem somewhere, the dominant ethic dictated, move on and flee rather than fix it (or, better yet, just throw it away if possible). Growth cushioned the hardships of a ruthlessly changing economy.

This throwaway ethic is linked to a final tragedy: the culture of individualism and present-mindedness that gives little value to community or history. Even from an economic point of view, it is wasteful to abandon the buildings and infrastructure of towns like Homestead and the hundreds of urban neighborhood equivalents in cities like Chicago, New York, Detroit and, now, Los Angeles. As individuals, we are created through our communities, and if we are willing to abandon them casually, we also weaken the means of creating new generations with a sense of history.

Yet ultimately, the community that developed at Homestead was a passive and cramped expression of the residents' potential. Serrin paints a full picture, celebrating Homestead's homey festivities, lamenting its racial prejudices (worsened by the company's strikebreaking tactics, which pitted ethnic groups against each other). Homestead was no

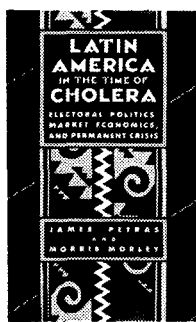
utopia, but the individualist world-view reflected in Reich's questions undermines the political promise of liberalism. The goals of liberalism, or American social democracy, require a social assertion of values that challenge the marketplace domination of society.

The answer to the tragedy of Homestead is not assistance to help workers move to possibly better jobs elsewhere, although that's surely a humane piece of any overall policy. Rather, society must come to grips with the other flaws—the lack of workers' stake in their workplaces, the absence of democracy, the short-term financial orientation of business, the throwaway ethic. That will require a stronger voice for workers and communities, as well as society as a whole, in the decision-making of our major corporations. Reaffirming the importance of community is a way, both symbolically and politically, of challenging the dominance of corporation, market and job over everything else of value in society.

Homestead—its workers and community residents—fought Carnegie, Frick and the Pinkertons in 1892 not just about wages and unionism but about a view of the rights of all citizens against the emerging business order. They lost not only the strike but the broader battle.

The most immediate tragedy is simply that most people don't care about Homestead or its people or the thousands of other communities like it. Bill Serrin cared, and the book he has written may make a few others do so as well. ◀

P O L I T I C S



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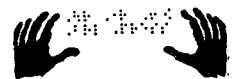
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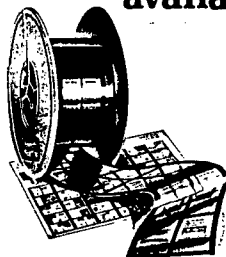
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Then we all go to work, resolutely trying to rein in impulses to tell horror stories. They leak out anyway. We can't quite believe we're talking to people who really care about the fact that for 12 years this agency has sabotaged its mandate, buried basic data, hidden and charged for basic procedural documents, and cavalierly ignored or dismissed our properly filed and entered interventions. But we warm up to the task.

Then, suddenly, it's all over. The transition team is driving this afternoon like a bus, and we've arrived at our destination. No one offers to lead us out of temporary office hell. We bump into a few vending machines and leave.

But not without an unaccustomed lifting of the daily cynicism about power and policy. It's not everything, but it's a very considerable something when an incoming political team volunteers to engage the disenfranchised. After all, the gesture alone raises expectations, which will then have at least to be addressed if not met. It's also a very considerable something when that team doesn't just listen to gripes but actively solicits advice on how to expand active citizenship around policy-making.

Meanwhile, the glow from the transition team spreads far and wide. "I got a call from the transition team, too," says a friend. Turned out they were interested in finding out about the apartment he was renting; they're shopping for incoming personnel.

It's going to get very interesting when the new gang unpacks.

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I N T H E E N D

My date with the transition team

By Pat Aufderheide

I felt like a Doonesbury character. I finally got it. I got The Call.

Actually, I just got a call. A brisk, generic, very young person asked me if I could show up for a meeting with the presidential transition team, to discuss the immediate future of a federal agency.

Well, sure I could. I'd spent the Reagan-Bush years at ground zero, where public-interest advocates like me had been cheerfully treated as beneath contempt. I'd even gotten used to it. It had come to seem almost normal, or at least a sour personal fate, that our crowd should spend its adulthood on the sidelines in the biggest power game around, occasionally issuing a Bronx cheer but mostly being ignored. When the right wing would get cranked up about the liberal threat, it was actually kind of touching—at least somebody noticed us.

So this was big news, the kind of occasion in which you wake up thinking about What to Wear. There was, as it turned out, no need to bother about such niceties. The transition team works out of several floors of a downtown Washington office building, where it seems not a single person has had a moment to so much as tape a family photo to the wall. It's a rabbit warren of paper, desolate desks and impromptu equipment arrangements. Vending machines offer an eerie simulacrum of sustenance. Once ensconced, it's possible to believe you might never figure out how to get out.

But getting in is a scene. There's an airport ambience. Security gates are up, with very unfunny people guarding them. They channel a steady, seemingly nonstop stream of visitors that spills out of the elevators. Files, documents and briefs in hand, they step out ready to give their best policy recommendations to the teams, clusters, liaisons of the transition.

This is not the lockstep look of the passing era. The

The phone rings.

It's the new president's people.

They want ITT's woman in

Washington to come down and give them advice. And it isn't even a crank call.



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diversity of the crowd looks more like what you might encounter at a bus stop than at a Washington policy conference. The buzz is infectiously enthusiastic, uncool.

It's policy input gone retail—the K-Mart of political reform. We're all here with our blue-light specials, our little piece of the answer. Happy to serve.

Once we all get our badges and our escort, we wend our way up and down staircases, down corridors and finally into a conference room increasingly crammed with people with Something to Say. That's when the transition team guy explains what we're here for. After us, he says, the briefing-book team will meet with trade associations and industry groups. Our conversation will guide their next one.

The team's big question for us: "We need to find out ways for this agency to get all kinds of input justly and fairly represented, not just from people with money."

Say what? People can't quite believe their ears. The honcho goes on to belabor the obvious: "Frankly, the corporate community has a lot more money than all the people in this room." Consensus comes easy on this point. The librarian and disabled spokesperson and children's advocate and public-interest computer programmer and the rest of us accede without a peep.

Then the honcho explains that another top-down directive is to figure out how to get the agency's staff itself to reflect the demography of the American population. The equal-opportunity mandate is, according to him, one of the president-elect's priorities.

The sincerity quotient appears to be pretty high. We listen, trying hard to separate rhetoric from reality. It's been a long time since anyone in power spoke our language.

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